

2019 VADA Chapter Challenge - A Great Dressage Day in Northern Virginia

Anne Harrington, Show Manager
Photos courtesy of Marlene McGrath, VADA/Nova

After months of planning, Chapter conference calls, threatening heat waves, and last-minute flurry, the VADA Chapter Challenge show day passed all too quickly. Riders began to gather on Friday afternoon, August 2, at the Morven Park Equestrian Center in Leesburg, VA, with a significant number making long trips to represent their Chapters.



With our two wonderful judges, Peggy Parisi (r) and Helen George (r) and their scribes in place, the competition started with the signing of our national anthem by Show Secretary, Carol Thomas. VADA is especially grateful to Helen George, whose day of judging was secured through the 2019 VADA on-line auction. In addition to donating her time, she also donated her travel and per diem expenses.



No show is without a few hiccups, and Chapter Challenge may have had a few, but through creative shifting of ride times and the great support of competitors for one another, issues were resolved. There was going to be a combined team from CEN, SHEN, and SW, but when the CEN rider had to scratch, that left the other two riders missing the required third member of their team. Since Nova was the host team and had many riders competing, two Nova board members, Mary Callen and Dilly Jackson, stepped in to join the combined team, which ended up winning the competition. In another case, disaster was averted when both the keys and spare



keys were accidentally locked in a truck, leaving a junior rider without a way to make it to the show. Another junior rider family was able to make a detour, pick up the horse and rider and get everyone to the show – and with some creative work from the Show Secretary, everyone got in their rides. To the credit of the competitors, the quality of the riding was very good. Many classes had no scores below 60, including the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th level

classes. Congratulations to all the competitors for their hard work in preparing for the competition.



In addition to the class ribbons that schooling shows normally have, Chapter Challenge is unique because of the special awards sponsored by the Chapters, some of which are objective (high score categories, oldest & youngest riders) and some subjective (best tail, most blinding bling). Meredith McGrath of SW, who was on the Chapter Challenge Committee, headed up the task of scouting tails and bling while the Show Manager scoured the final entries spreadsheet for oldest and youngest riders. The competitors appreciated the great prizes

provided by the Chapters, which were announced during the morning ring break, over lunch, and at the end of the day. See below for the full list of prizes and class results.

Throughout the competition, everyone was supported by our small, but superb army of volunteers who scribed, stewarded the rings, ran the tests, scored, handed out awards, managed the music, and did the set up and take down. They received compliments from the judges, competitors, and show management for their dedicated work.

After lunch, everyone gathered to watch the Chapter Challenge showcase event, the Musical Freestyle Sweepstakes. With \$460 in cash prizes on the line, the competitors were cheered on by an enthusiastic audience and rewarded by appreciative judges. Scores ranged from 76.167% to 64.700%,



with Carol Thomas (Nova) winning the Sweepstakes

and the \$276 1st prize (which was donated to the Rainbow Therapeutic Riding Program), Meredith McGrath (SW) taking 2nd place and \$138, and Anne Draine (NE), taking 3rd place and \$46.



It was sad to see the day come to the end, but we look forward to having Chapters show up in even larger numbers for next year's Chapter Challenge. The day was summed up very nicely from one of our competitors from a neighboring state: "My girlfriend that also showed yesterday and I agreed that the volunteers and participants were the nicest we have ever come across!"

We encourage all VADA members to support this important VADA show, regardless of which Chapter is hosting. The show offers members from across the state the chance to compete together on teams at a quality venue with experienced judges and great prizes.