

SUZANNE HABEREK

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE *Instructor Of The Year*

BY SARA PIZZUTO



Since joining the team at Fire Run Farm in 2013, Suzanne Haberek has worked to expand the Morgan breed's presence on the west coast. She celebrated the success of farm owner Teri Rumens along with Kurt Rumens, Juan Gonzales and Olyvia O'Brien, after Teri Rumens and Treble's Patent Pending GCH earned dual western pleasure world titles at the 2022 Morgan Grand National.



Along with assistant Olyvia O'Brien, Suzanne Haberek was responsible for the success of many horse and rider teams throughout the 2022 show season.

“Keep growing and keep going.” That is the phrase that trainer and instructor Suzanne Haberek uses to fuel herself and others. That simple sentence can summarize her strong desire to continuously improve.

“Keep growing and keep going,” she said. “That’s the big one. You hit your mark and you say, ‘Ok, where else can we take this?’ And you grow it again and you keep expanding and you have fun with that vision and see how big you can make it.”

Since assuming the role of head trainer and instructor at Kurt and Teri Rumens’ Washington based Fire Run Farm, Suzanne Haberek has dominated and worked to expand the Morgan breed on the west coast. She carried that momentum into the 2022 show season, which resulted in a triumphant year with many world and national titles hanging from the Fire Run banner. It was these outstanding achievements that helped Haberek earn your vote, as the People’s Choice Instructor Of The Year.

Suzanne Haberek spent her childhood involved in the equine world with her older sister, who was interested in the hunter/jumper industry. She met a friend in the first grade that introduced her to the Morgan and American Saddlebred breeds.

“I was just hooked, and I never looked back and I just always stayed with the Morgans and Saddlebreds from then on,” she said.

Haberek’s dream of owning her own training operation came to fruition when she established Trinity Farm in New York. The barn thrived under her direction and Haberek had no intention of ever leaving the northeast. That was until she was approached repeatedly by Kurt and Teri Rumens to join them in Snohomish, Washington at their Fire Run Farm.

“I built my farm in New York because it was my dream to have my own place and I loved it and I built my farm there to stay there,” Haberek said. “Kurt and Teri talked to me about coming out here and I said, ‘Thank you but no thank you.’ I wasn’t interested because my farm was pretty new, and we were pretty successful and doing really well with it and I worked really hard. They asked me again 10 months later. It took me 2 years to say yes.”

Eventually, the Rumens convinced Haberek to make the cross-country move and head west to become a part of the Fire Run team in early 2013. Haberek explained that she was enticed by the challenge of growing the Morgan breed’s presence on the west coast.

“When I grew up, the west coast used to be a dominating force in the industry,” she said. “The best horses used to come from the west coast when I was doing horses on the east coast. The west coast has been dwindling and it has taken a hit and so Kurt and Teri really wanted to get something going here and that message really resonated with me. It was an opportunity to do my part for the industry and to take this challenge on and that was honestly a huge part of why I moved. I wanted to take on this challenge to be a part of bringing people back into the breed. Kurt and Teri had such a passion for it, and I did so it was like let’s see what we can do.”

Together, Haberek and the Rumens have worked diligently to cultivate a strong Morgan presence on the west coast throughout their decade long partnership. A large group of horses and riders make Fire Run Farm their home base, riding and showing under the direction of Haberek along with assistants Olyvia O'Brien and Juan Gonzales. They tackled the 2022 season with great success, with many of their new horse and rider combinations earning world and national titles.

Natalie Kizzier and TTMF Tomodachi earned dual sets of roses as both the Hunter Pleasure Youth World Champions and the Hunter Pleasure Amateur Reserve World Champions. Stablemate Emma DuCoeur was aboard Clayhill Dillinger for the victory pass as the Park Saddle Junior Exhibitor 16-17 Grand National Champion before driving her partner to the title of the Park Harness Junior Exhibitor World Champion. Haberek explained that pairing riders with new horses is one of her favorite aspects of her job.

“To me it is a form of art when putting that look together,” she said. “You have to have a look and a balance, and their personalities have to match up. You have to look at the mindset of the rider and the mindset of the horse and who is going to help each other or what does each one need and how can they successfully match each other to bring out the best in each other. Sometimes when you are buying new horses, it’s hard because you don’t know that horse. But you know the rider. Or vice versa, you know the horse but it’s a new rider coming in and you are trying to build



The Fire Run Farm team garnered top ribbons throughout the past year including at the Silicon Valley Horse Show. Suzanne Haberek and Olyvia O'Brien greeted Lauren Gregoire with Warchest GCH, Kurt Rumens who rode Hollybrook Rembrandt, and Natalie Kizzier with TTMF Tomodachi after all three teams won their \$5,000 jackpot championships.

this new rider that's never had a horse. Or it's both. I love it. It's something I have always had a passion for and to me it's a bit of an art project."

From new combinations, to show ring veterans, Fire Run also celebrated the success of Treble's Patent Pending GCH and Teri Rumens. This duo left Oklahoma City with an unblemished record, including being named the Western Pleasure Amateur World Champions and the Western Pleasure Ladies Amateur World Champions.

"Last year we had an incredible year," Haberek said. "It was beyond successful, and we were thrilled with it."

The Fire Run team also had reason to be thrilled with their victorious equitation riders. Haberek is no stranger to success as an equitation instructor, having previously instructed Triple Crown winning saddle seat equitation rider, Michaela Gillispie, among other triumphant students. Haberek was responsible for Sage Jellerson's equitation achievements in 2022, when the young rider was named the Hunt Seat Equitation 14-15 World Champion—a year after she earned the reserve world title in the same offering. Jellerson's partner, Merriehill Black Label GCH, is a former multiple world champion from the hunter pleasure ranks and was transitioned masterfully to the equitation division by Haberek. She explained that much determination is required when working to equitate a horse that is new to the job.

"You need patience and time," she said. "You need a lot of time and that's it. It is that simple."

With the new show season approaching, Suzanne Haberek is looking forward to further raising the bar with her horse and rider teams at Fire Run Farm. Haberek chooses to never settle and is continuously looking for ways to improve the horses and riders that show under her tutelage. For her, each new year presents new challenges to grow and strengthen skills.

"There are new teams, those stepping up

to a new age group, and there is always a new goal with every year," she said. "There is never a plateau point where we can just say, 'We are good.' That's never me and that's never how we run the program. That's never how I attack anything. That's never how I allow the riders or horses to be. If it's good, how can we make it better? For me, we look at 2023 and how can we make it better. That's the big one and I am really excited because we have new teams but it's also taking the teams that we have and fine-tuning them and putting them together in a new way."

Haberek is also equally excited about the flourishing breeding program at Fire Run Farm. She was quick to mention the young stock that are Fire Run homebreds that she is looking forward to guiding in their show ring careers along with her string of seasoned campaigners. Haberek explained that when a challenge arises, regardless of what horse she is working, she reminds herself to keep going. "Have a plan and just keep sticking with it," she said. "Have a plan, have a vision, and keep going at it. Hold that big picture and keep growing it. You always hit some bumps along the road but you just have to keep going."

Whether working with a performance horse, guiding an equitation rider in pursuit of excellence, or welcoming a foal into the world, Suzanne Haberek has established herself as a dominant force in the Morgan industry. She took on the challenges at the helm of Fire Run Farm a decade ago and has since worked to expand the Morgan breed and allow it to thrive on the west coast.

"Kurt and Teri are visionaries, and we are all that way," she said. "It's like a canvas and we are always creating. It is nonstop and we are always taking the paintbrush and thinking, 'What can we add to it?' It is always exciting here because it is ever growing, ever changing, and ever expanding."



Suzanne Haberek has long been linked to successful equitation students. She directed Sage Jellerson and Merriehill Black Label GCH to the roses as the Hunt Seat Equitation 14-15 World Champions in 2022.



Emma DuCoeur teamed up with her new partner, Clayhill Dillinger, to be crowned the Park Saddle Junior Exhibitor 16-17 Grand National Champion as well as the Park Harness Junior Exhibitor World Champion. Suzanne Haberek and Juan Gonzales assisted with the victory passes.