

## RMC ALUMNA JEAN CUNNINGHAM FIRST RUNNER UP IN FIRST EFFORT AT ALL AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE CONGRESS QUEEN CONTEST

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**BILLINGS** – In a contest for queen where contestants have to know their horses, Jean Cunningham proved the value of her education at Rocky Mountain College as she took first runner-up honors in her first year competing for the All American Quarter Horse Congress Queen.

Cunningham, of Portland, Ore. graduated in 2008, majoring in equestrian studies, with an emphasis on equitation and training. Jean represented the Oregon Quarter Horse Association. This contest is judged on knowledge of AQHA rules, horsemanship, personality, and how well judges feel the queen will represent the All American Quarter Horse Congress. The queen travels for a year representing the AAQHC

Cunningham, who works and trains Quarter horses at her home near Portland, said she was very fortunate to have a good horse.

“I was extremely fortunate to be able to ride A New Lark In Town (nicknamed “Scottie”). This horse has been around the block. He has a lifetime total of 580 points and has several World Championships under his belt, including winning the Select World in Trail back in August,” she noted.

Cunningham took second in horsemanship to match the second place she won in the AQHA rules test.

“Without Rocky Mountain College I would never have come so far in the contest,” Cunningham said. “Scott Neuman (RMC equestrian studies director), Marilyn Randall (RMC equestrian studies professor), and Chris Brown (RMC equestrian instructor prepared me to compete at the level of the Quarter Horse Congress, which is a top horse show in the Quarter horse industry.”

Neuman first introduced Jean to both the association’s congress and queen contest in 2007.

Brown taught Jean to be strong and effective in the saddle, but also beautiful to watch, which was a great help in the horsemanship event, as they are judging the preciseness, strength and position of the rider, according to Jean.

Randall taught Jean to be accurate and knowledgeable of the AQHA Handbook of Rules and Regulations in her Equine judging classes, which was a key element in doing well in the written exam event, she added.

Jean also credited Amy Neuman for lessons in how the horse industry works, and Mallory Storm, also an equine major, who helped find trainers, Jim and Deanna Searles, who provided “a phenomenal horse.”

Jean said she also enjoyed the fellowship of the other contestants, and the fashion show featuring the latest Western attire.

“Without Rocky Mountain College equestrian program I never would have lived this dream,” she said.

Jean also credited her most loyal fans -- her parents, Wayne and Donna Cunningham – for their support.

“Without them I would not have been able to attend Rocky and pursue my passion,” she said.

For her efforts, Jean received a bronze trophy, three Congress medallions, a hunt saddle, head stall and reins, jewelry, pajamas, clothes, several pairs of boots, artwork, and many horse supplies and products.

“It was definitely worth the work and I had some of the best moments of my life,” she said.

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