

Hello! I'm Monika Hagen from Haldenwang, Bavaria, Germany, and I'm a candidate for the 2021 APHA Board of Directors.

For the past 30 years, I have owned, raised, and showed Paint Horses with the support of my husband Georg and three children Stefan, Verena, and Lena. In 1995, I spotted my first Paint Horse stallion, Hesa Tiny Paycheck, in a pen full of Quarter Horses in Canada. I fell in love and imported him to Germany, so I could start breeding Paints.

Paint Horses have since become my life. I've worn out many pairs of boots as a breeder, exhibitor, instructor, trainer, youth coach, APHA Professional Horsewoman, and manager of our family business, SQ Quality Horses. I've imported hundreds of horses from the U.S. and Canada. I've also bred more than 100 registered Paints, who have gone on to successful careers in the show pen and out on the trail. My customers, my family, and I have earned numerous titles at German and European events.

My experience in association leadership began in 2000, when I was elected as a regional leader in Paint Horse Club Germany, APHA's largest international affiliate with about 1,500 members. I then served as president of PHCG for four years, and during that time I managed the European Paint Horse Championship, an event that has grown to become the largest APHA-approved show in the world. Following my election as an APHA state director, I joined the International Advisory Committee, serving as chair from 2015 to 2020. This year, I joined the Breed Integrity Advisory Committee to listen, learn, and contribute my international experience.

Looking ahead, I think that APHA's biggest challenge is surviving the economic recession, adapting to a completely changed world and forging a new path ahead. How do we grow in terms of the number of horses and members, both domestically and internationally, when a lot of people are losing their jobs?

Personally, I witnessed a big shift this year to recreational riding. We worked hard to adapt and, in the end, we've had one of our best years in terms of new customers and horse sales. We have a lot of new students. People can't go on big trips. They're staying close to home and they're looking for recreational activities, to spend time outdoors and to perhaps fulfill a lifelong dream of learning to ride. People want to have fun with Paint Horses. This shift will certainly impact APHA as well.

I think international membership, international registrations and the international market will be more important than ever to APHA's future success. Today, 20 percent of our members live outside the U.S. Last year, 36 percent of horses registered were foaled abroad. I predict those percentages will grow. I think we need someone with international experience on the Board of Directors to bring that global perspective to the decision-making table.

Nurturing the international market is also good for breeders in the U.S. We need to get more good horses over here—and not just show horses. The top show horses sell themselves. We

need good, high-quality horses for everyone. We need good riding horses that people can buy and have fun with. We need to reach out to the small breeders in the U.S. with good horses to sell and connect them with international buyers. I have ideas on how to make that happen.

The aspect of APHA that I am most passionate about is the horses. Paints have been the focus of my life's work. They have given my family so much. I also believe in the APHA way. I like the democratic way APHA is governed. People have a chance to express their opinions and be heard. We can have very different points of view, but everyone can share his opinion in a friendly and respectful atmosphere. I really like this about APHA and want to make sure this great association can help future generations enjoy Paints.

Thank you for reading! If you have any questions, you can send me an email (monika.hagen@sq-horses.de) or contact me on Messenger or WhatsApp. I look forward to meeting you in person or virtually at Convention, February 26-28, 2021. I sincerely hope you'll consider voting for me—or asking your area's director to vote for me—in the upcoming election. I promise to listen and serve you with integrity on the Board of Directors.
Danke schön!