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Picante

& KIMBERLY WALDEN



Mark Brown
ART DIRECTOR

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Photos by Marty Barr of Barr Studios

Kimberly and Perry Walden said they both have a passion for their broodmares.

Kimberly Walden encourages next generation

By **ZOË HAGGARD**
zhaggard@t-g.com

Kimberly Walden said while growing up she wanted to be a teacher and a veterinarian. Being a teacher won out. However, her way to connect with her students as a teacher and principal was through animals. While an elementary school teacher and principal in Texas and California, she said her classroom “always had something going on” with animals— guineas pigs having babies and as a principal a science lab with all kinds of animals including a prehensile tail skink. As far as the Tennessee Walking Horses go.... She set up a phone tree where over 50 students were able to come watch the special experience of a colt being born and learn to walk.

Her life and career changed, when the school curriculum became test-oriented, Walden left education and pursued her “five-star hotel” pet resort, Forest Shadows Pet Resort in Magnolia, Texas, full time and then built a barn in hopes to bring a great Tennessee Walking Horse Trainer to Texas.

And now her attention has turned to youth riders.

“Working with the youth is my way of helping the industry, by putting the kids back in the ring—because if we don’t have kids in the ring, what are we going to have in the future? We need to build up this industry back to where it was.” she said.

Kimberly and Perry Walden bought what used to be Christmas Creek Farm in March.

It’s now Forest Shadows Farm, with Joe Lester as the trainer leasing the barn.

“My ultimate goal in life will be to have a barn full of horses like that I can use to help make a difference in children’s, veterans and anyone with special needs lives ...I want to give them an opportunity to feel some success through connecting with a horse. I want to be able to help the people

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Kimberly Walden and Senorita, full sister of Habanero Picante, at the 2021 TWHBEA Summer Sizzler.

Walden

(Continued from Page 1A)

in the community,” Walden said. She said she would especially like to help both underprivileged and handicapped kids get their opportunity in the ring.

“I want to provide those kids and adults in the community, that otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to bond and ride horses. Studies show that caring for animals and bonding can really help people/children with special needs.” She’s also spent

time asking and sponsoring more flat shod classes to add to the youth divisions.

Walden’s own love of horses began in California, as a youth herself, at Hunewill Ranch—a century-old dude ranch bordering Yosemite that’s still in operation today.

While at college at the University of Redlands, where she graduated in 1986, Walden carried two jobs in order to pay for quarter horses because her “parents wouldn’t pay for it.”

She was introduced to walking horses by Jim Landers and started showing in California with a walker called Showboat

Surprise bought from Russ Thompson.

Now, she and her husband, Perry—a former police officer in Chattanooga—show in an array of classes.

They’ve also been successful with their broodmares as several of their babies already in the show ring, including two this year!

“In my division, a couple of years ago, I had two horses in the top ten in the same class I was in, that we bred! That was amazing,” she said.

And her advice for being successful?

Lots of time, hard work and commitment is key to anyone’s success!

Children and horses have been her passion all her life. She states that she feels blessed that she gets to continue with both, by helping youth carry on the walking horse tradition and pave a way for the future of our industry.

“I get more enjoyment out of putting the girls in and the girls doing good than I do showing myself...I think that it’s not only a blast, but touches my heart, seeing them be successful,” she said.

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Kimberly Walden and Senorita.

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Kimberly Walden and husband Perry.

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Dani Rae and Sadie Fowler cheer for world grand champion contenders in what was Dani Rae's first experience watching the final class of the evening.

Flipping for the Celebration

An interview with Sadie Fowler

STAFF REPORT

(Editor's Note: The following Q&A is with Sadie Fowler, a former editor of this section and long-time walking horse supporter. Fowler's daughter, Dani Rae Fowler, recently won her national gymnastics competition in Savannah, but this week her focus will be on Shelbyville, where she'll be cheering her friends on at the Celebration.)

Question: Thanks for doing this feature with us, Sadie. You're actually the former

editor of this section (and have edited many other horse show related articles) for the better part of the last couple decades. How does it feel to be on the other side of the interview?

• This is unexpected, and a little strange, but it's also fun! I love the Celebration, always have, and I try to support our area and its growth as much as I can. I'm happy to be in a position to give back and help shine a light on our community, one that has been so supportive of my growth of the years as well as my daughter's. There's no better place to raise a child than Bedford

► See **Sadie**, Page 10A



K. Ellen

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Sadie Fowler, right, stands beside Lorraine Rosbury and former WGC walking horse, I'm Maverick. Fowler covered the walking horse industry for several years before making a career move toward real estate. She also remains a consultant for media relations and PR jobs.

Sadie

(Continued from Page 7A)

County, and the Celebration is one of the huge reasons why I wholeheartedly believe that.

Question: You grew up showing horses, and have one daughter of your own. Did you ever think of having her show?

• That is a funny question because, while Dani Rae loves horses, rides any chance she can, would love to show, and most importantly LOVES attending the show, I guess it is ironic that I steered her away from actually getting too involved in the actu-

ally competitive aspect of horse shows. It was deliberate, I will admit, and the reason being is that I did not want to expose her to a hobby and not be able to support it for the long-haul. Showing horses is a very expensive thing to pursue if you want to be at the top. I learned this lesson the hard way when I was a teenager and my horses were sold after my parents divorced. I was devastated. When my daughter was born and it was evident she had inherited the competitive gene from both myself and her dad, we felt she needed an outlet and we chose to try out gymnastics because it is a sport in which one's success is almost entirely dependent on the individual's talent and will. I am not

► See **Sadie**, Page 11A

Sadie

(Continued from Page 10A)

sure if it turned out to be a bargain sport, but it was the right move for Dani!

Question: Yes, we hear she is quite the athlete and is now thriving as a nationally award-winning gymnast —now working out at an elite gym. Tell us about that.

• She recently won the national championship in all-around competition at the AAU finals in Savannah, Georgia. That was the culmination of so many years of blood, sweat and tears (under the banner of Tullahoma Gymnastics and Cheer) and we are beyond proud of her talent and tenacity.

Starting with a “mommy and me” class at age 2, Dani stayed with TGC for almost 10 years and the lessons and positive experience that came from that can’t be described well in words. The coaches taught Dani more than gymnastics. The bonding and consistent support we received from the gym was the glue that held us all together for years and I am forever grateful. Her winning the national championships at the end of the season in June was the event that capped off her time at that gym because she basically reached a ceiling. So, the decision

then became whether or not to push forward and advance to the next phase, which is more of an elite gymnastics program. She chose to push ahead and so now she is training out of a new gym under the direction of Michelle Aryant. It’s a sink or swim kind of program at this point and we are excited to see how Dani does. Either way, we are beyond proud of the time she has put in and we will be just as proud if she ends up choosing to play basketball, swim, or even show horses!

Question: Did you all watch the Olympics this year? A lot of success for Team USA, not without their team tribulations. Has that inspired her in her practices?

• Yes, we love the Olympics and have watched the movies about Simone thousands of times. I watch the Olympics, and my daughter’s competitions, in total awe of what these athletes push themselves to do. It gives me chills to think about it. I absolutely love watching it and I cry almost every time she competes, which of course drives her crazy! So as the proud parent, I get emotional watching gymnastics, especially Dani. But when Dani watches Simone or the world class gymnasts compete she does it with later focus, as though she is in

school or truly learning a lesson. Gymnasts are insanely focused, tough and determined individuals and sometimes I shake my head over the fact that my daughter is one of them.

Question: As a former horse show enthusiast and gym mom yourself, what are some similarities between the two sports.

• Easy. It’ takes a tremendous amount of time, energy, talent and teamwork to succeed. As for gymnastics, I can say for certain it takes a village, really. Same with horses. We are so grateful to the support we’ve received over the years to help propel Dani Rae forward and shape her into the awesome athlete and human she has become. It’s part of the reason we come to the show every year and cheer on these competitors. We appreciate their hard work and want to reciprocate and show our support to our many friends here who have cheered Dani on over the years!

Question: What does it mean to you and your daughter to have The Celebration take place in your hometown? What’s your favorite part of the event?

• I have always known how special the event is to our community on so many levels and I have tried to instill that appreciation in Dani Rae over the years. It was an

easy thing to teach her. For many years, I worked the horse show each August and so Dani associated it with late nights and hard work anyway. But whenever I could bring her along I did, and so she saw the fun side and pageantry of it all as well. Even though she is not a competitor there, per se, she has full understanding of the show’s significance to our community —and she truly values it. As for my favorite memory, I will never forget a couple years ago when she was old enough to stay with me through the final class while I was working the show. She was about as wide-eyed and excited as I’ve ever seen as she got to sit in the box, front row and clap to the Flat Walk Boogie as the stake contenders entered the ring. That moment is one of my absolute favorite memories of the Celebration in all my years of being there.

Question: What’s your favorite place to eat, and any other recommendations for first time visitors?

• We have so many great spots in the local region I could go on and on. I think the best part of the show in this regard is the special parties and events that take place alongside the show, and even behind the scenes. People go all out to make sure guests have an amazing time. Shelbyville comes alive

▶ See **Sadie**, Page 12A



Front Row: Miranda Byford, PT, DPT; Leisa Farris, PTT (30-year employee); Mary Leta Shavers, PT; Back Row: Savannah Sullivan, PTA; Armenta Fowler, PTA; Jacque Daffern, Office Manager and Patient Coordinator



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Sadie

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during the show, and the show keeps Shelbyville ticking. But it is all the behind the scene dinners, parties and little “extras” that keep the show alive and make it so special in my opinion.

Question: Please tell our readers, some who read your column for years, what have you been up to most recently?

• Over the last year I have made it official and launched my real estate career in Middle Tennessee. I have always been passionate about horses and I am super grateful to this area and its people for the support I’ve received over the years, which has allowed me to grow in my professional and personal life. Shelbyville is the place I chose to plant roots in and grow my career 20 years ago, so the idea of being able to reciprocate and share what I’ve learned about the area and help folks find their next, first, forever, or even horse home is one that excites me.

Question: How has this shift changed your view of Bedford County, or has it just helped to expand it?

• My career change has without a doubt made me even more grateful and aware of all the wonderful opportunities I have had as a result of planting roots in Bedford County and investing my time as a journalist. I have always felt blessed to be able to introduce people to the area and shine a positive light on the community, including the horse industry, through words (via my stories or columns as an editor and long time journalist) —so, to be able to continue introducing folks to the area through a different platform with real estate is awesome. I put a lot of pressure on myself to keep the buyer’s needs front and center, just as I had done the same in regards to sharing the many wonderful stories about the horse community over the years. It’s the same concept, but with a different twist I



Dani Rae Fowler, second from left, wins the gold at the AAU gymnastics championships this past June in Savannah.

suppose.

Question: In addition to being a long time editor to the paper, others may not know you have quite a history with real estate in a more unofficial capacity. Beginning all the way up north being the executor of a multi-million dollar estate to flipping houses for fun, how has this helped prepare you for selling real estate in the walking horse capital of the world?

• I grew up on a farm in upstate New York and traveled the Northeast as a kid, going to horse shows. I was exposed to all sorts of different people and ways of life from early on, and I think that is what prepared me to handle my first real estate transaction, which was the sale of my father’s estate after he passed away from an illness 12 years ago. It was a lot to handle, but the lessons were immeasurable. From there, I was able to invest in some other

properties of all different types over the years and with each transaction I learned something new about real estate and I want to be able to reciprocate that knowledge with my clients. In addition to the actual lessons I learned from that first transaction of my father’s estate, the lessons my father taught me over the years as a stellar cattle dealer and auction guru have truly carried over and I didn’t even realize how much I had inherited from him in this capacity until I got into real estate. I love the deal-making part of real estate.

Question: For anyone thinking of moving to the area or buying a second home, what do you think is most important for them to know?

• You better hurry up and make the move because it’s not slowing down anytime soon! I travel a lot and have friends from all over the place. I can’t tell them enough about how much of a hotbed we are in here in Middle Tennessee, and Shelbyville is no exception.

Question: Thanks again for joining us! Where can people go to reach out or see more about you?

• I’d love to hear from the readers! I just launched a new website –SadieFowler.com. I love hearing from old friends and making new ones! My number is 931-639-3525 and my email is sellitsadie@gmail.com. Thanks so much for having me and best of luck to all the exhibitors! Dani Rae and I look forward to cheering you all on from the box!

Brief history of The Celebration

By **ZOË HAGGARD**
zhaggard@t-g.com

As much as the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration has given to the community, it makes sense that its inception began with community service in mind.

Over 80 years ago, the Shelbyville Lions and Rotary Club set out to begin a “festival of sorts” to raise money for their community service.

“Back when the festival began, a couple members went over to Winchester to a Crimson Clover festival and they realized they needed something kind of like a festival,” said Lions Club President Marc Majors. Among those members was Henry Davis, a horse trainer from Wartrace, who is credited with beginning the Celebration.

And it was finally decided that since the Tennessee Walking Horse was being marveled at inside the horse industry—being appreciated for both its strength and size—it was the perfect way to bring in a big crowd.

It did just that. The first Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration was held September 7–9 in 1939, on the Tate Athletic Field, just north of Shelbyville High School. Ticket sales were in excess of 40,000, according to the Shelbyville City website.

During that first show, Strolling Jim was named the first World Grand Champion Tennessee Walking Horse.

Walking horses were originally known as Tennessee Pacers. They were officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1950 and became Tennessee’s official state horse in 2000.

“We probably wouldn’t have the industry if it wasn’t for the Lions Club,” said Majors.

So, when the Founder’s Trophy is presented to the Grand Champion at the end of this year’s show, watchers can understand that the everything the Celebration has given to the community began with a community-inspired project.

Even though the industry has grown, faced backlash, and changed in form, the Celebration remains a tradition and a legacy that have passed from generation to generation.

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From left, Bill Dearing, Marc Majors, and Eddie Wright.

Lions Club: “going strong” after 83 years

By ZOË HAGGARD
zhaggard@t-g.com

Shelbyville Lions Club is still “going strong” in its involvement with the Tennessee Walking Horse Celebration, according to co-program chairman Bill Dearing, a Lions member for 51 years.

One of the founding organizations of the Celebration back in 1939, the Lions Club has made and sold programs as one of their main fundraisers for the year.

A Celebration staple, the program includes information about local merchants as well as listings of the classes. Dearing said they sell around 1,500 copies.

It was decided in the early days of the Celebration that the Lions Club would do the programs. The Rotary Club operated the food booths.

“We send out letters every year to our merchants and then we get a response back from them,” Dearing said. “They’ve all been a really good help. We appreciate them.”

The programs go to print around the sec-

▶ See **Lions**, Page 14A

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Marc Majors: Lions Club President

By ZOË HAGGARD
zhaggard@t-g.com

Marc Majors, president of the Shelbyville Lions Club, remembers going to the Celebration with his father, R.M. Majors, a barber and lifetime member of the Lions Club.

He said it was always the biggest thing—to get the famous Optimist Club donuts, to sit in the booth, and watch show after show all while visiting with friends he hadn't seen all summer.

Now in his 16th year with the Lions Club, Majors said he's excited to be a part of the support for the Celebration. And through the money the Lions Club raises during the Celebration, their outreach helps not only the local community but also worldwide.

We've absolutely got to be able to take care of ourselves and there's

no better way than taking some of your extra time and making sure you're helping in a program where kids can see," Majors said.

"...Whether it be a flood halfway around the world, tornado relief—you name it—we're right there with money from the Celebration that we've earned."

One program specifically funded by the Lions Club is the Operation Kid Sight where the club chairman goes around to daycares and kindergartens with equipment that can check eyesight development to provide information to correct sight earlier.

"We do everything from local glasses support to testing kids' eyes locally to our international foundation to where if there's an emergency, Shelbyville Lions Club makes it to that emergency," Majors said.

The nature of the club's outreach, along with his father's influence, is what encouraged Majors to become a Lions member.

"I wanted to give back some of my time and they were going to honor my dad with lifetime membership about 16 years ago," he said.

And today he hopes to see both more involvement in the club and the Celebration as a whole through more community support.

"I definitely want to see more local people come out to support it...The people of Shelbyville need to know that they need to get out and support the Celebration because it makes it stronger...to be behind an industry we champion," Majors said.

Lions

(Continued from Page 13A)

ond week in August and will be available around the 23rd or 24th. The Lions Club will be set up inside Calsonic Arena during morning shows with programs selling at \$15.

And through those 83 years, the process, the responses, and the community support has remained traditional.

"Last couple years—with the COVID and everything—it's been sort of slow. But I think everything's picking back up and looking for a good show," Dearing said.

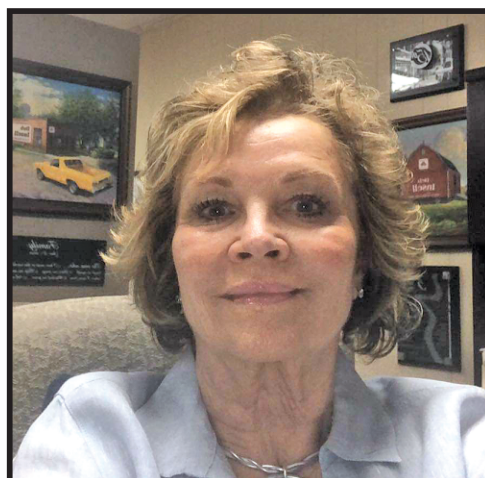


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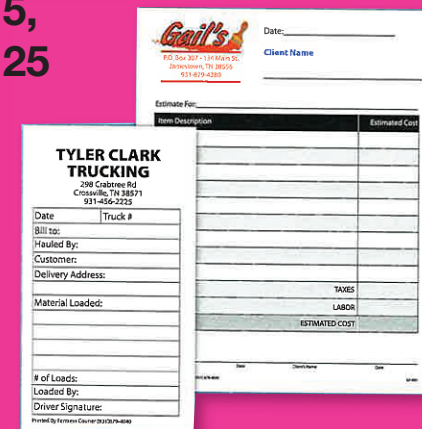
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