



Denise Parsons Gaited Advocate Intervention Team, Inc.



Denise Parsons has been riding and showing horses since 1973. Starting in the Hunter/Jumper world, she eventually found her way through Dressage, then English and Western Pleasure with Appaloosas, shifted focus to trail and finally after 30+ years of riding moved into gaited horses. First introduced to the Tennessee Walking Horse while still in High School through her Aunt, she didn't take the breed seriously at the time. After all, they don't trot! In 2005, she finally decided she was ready to change directions in her riding and got her first gaited horse, Buck, a big and pretty buckskin that she still owns today. She quickly found that this breed is not only comfortable for the trail, they are amazing athletes, versatile and have huge hearts. As a whole, they are easy to live with, easy to train and easy to ride compared with many of the breeds that she has ridden through the years.

Denise began showing Tennessee Walking Horses in 2007 and acquired a young gelding, I'm Royal Flash, from a trainer in Tennessee. It was on that trip that the reality of the abuse in the Walking Horse Industry really hit home. Even though she thought she was being careful to not visit trainers that would sore their horses, she discovered after getting home with her new horse, Benny, that even though he was a flat-shod horse, he had been sore. He was not even two when she bought him. He had developed ulcers in that training barn, which took years to fully rehab and continues to require special care because of the early abuse he suffered. He is 10 now, and is Denise's true "heart" horse. That once-in-a-lifetime horse that we should all be so lucky to have. In addition to Benny, she also owns and competes a lovely buckskin, Rhythm By Design, or Oz as he's called around the barn. Between the two, she has brought home many year-end championships. Denise actively shows in traditional gaited horse classes as well as Gaited Dressage, open competitive trail obstacle events and enjoys recreational trail riding. All of Denise's horses are either barefoot or "keg" shod (shod with regular horse shoes) depending on the horse's needs, they have balanced trims for optimal hoof health and are trained using a combination of classical dressage principles and good horsemanship. Training is a journey, not a destination...

In addition to being a staunch supporter for the sound, flat-shod Tennessee Walking Horse, Denise brings some unique perspectives to the table. She is the President of Equestrian Promotions, the promoter of Horse World Expo in Maryland and Pennsylvania, two of the largest multi-discipline, multi-breed equestrian events in the country. These events host tens-of-thousands of equestrians over two weekends in the winter. They bring together horse enthusiasts from all walks of life as well as over 500 vendors, over 200 clinicians and equine entertainers over the two events. This gives Denise an insider's view of the Equestrian community as a whole as a business, a hobby and a passion that her patrons share.

As a result of her work in raising awareness of soring and in helping the Tennessee Walking Horse as well as through her connections in the mainstream equestrian community, Denise has also become involved personally, in the rescue of gaited horses. There are so few people in the mid-Atlantic region with the knowledge of gaited horses and the contacts and networks to really be able to help gaited horses that find themselves at risk of going to slaughter. She felt it was important to give back something to the equestrian community and to the horses. She has partnered with several folks around the country that share the same vision and has formed Gaited Advocate Intervention Team, Inc. to rescue and network for at risk gaited horses with a focus towards the Tennessee Walking Horse. To date, group efforts have helped save hundreds of horses that may have otherwise been lost to slaughter.

Denise is a life-long resident in Maryland and has a small private farm where she keeps two of her personal horses as well as 2 rescue horses that are in rehab. She is married to her non-horse loving, but supportive husband, Jay. They share their home with two dogs and several cats. In addition to her passion for horses, she also enjoys training for competitive obedience with her dogs, is an avid catch-and-release fisherman and competes in Autocross (car racing).