



2019 NWAHA Board of Directors

Executive Committee



Amy Spinelli-Olson, Union Grove, WI - President

Amy Spinelli-Olson and her husband Chad live just a few miles away from her parents Chuck and Ruth Ann, who reside on the family horse farm she grew up on. Following in her family's footsteps, her horse addiction started quite early, starting her showing career at the age of two. She began showing Tennessee Walking Horses in 1980, and has continued since, owning five lovely Tennessee Walking Horses today. She actively supports NWAHA shows, events and activities; and has served as a BOD member, Rules Committee Chair, Vice-President and most recently as the NWAHA President. Professionally, Amy leads a marketing and communications team for a large healthcare company in Illinois and holds a BA in English and Advertising from Marquette University. She is honored to serve another term as the NWAHA President and will do her very best to positively grow and represent the entire NWAHA family.

Jim Potter, New London, OH - Vice-President

Jim has been training flat shod Tennessee Walking Horses professionally since 1988. He began by working part time out of a boarding barn with a few horses and now has a place of his own with 26 stalls. In addition to training 20+ horses, his customers consist primarily of middle aged (plus or minus) women, which proves that he has a lot of patience. Jim has served on the TWHBEA Board of Directors as an Ohio representative. He has been on the NWAHA board for 9 years - 5 years as a trustee, 1 year as Secretary and now as Vice President. He is known for taking 15-20 horses to NWAHA shows throughout the region and particularly enjoys working with young horses to develop them to their full potential. He is devoted to training sound, flat shod walking horses that his customers can show and enjoy.



Katie Tanner, Schertz, TX - Treasurer

Katie has been showing, trail riding and occasionally breeding and raising Tennessee Walking Horses for 14 years. She has served as a DQP and on several committees throughout her years as an NWAHA member. She joined the Board in 2014 in order to help promote the natural beauty and versatility of the sound, humanely trained TWH. At home, Katie is a U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel. She has an undergraduate and Master's degree in Business Management as well as a second Master's in Military Operational Art and Science. Having lived and participated in TWH activities in 6 different states over 15 years, she feels she is uniquely qualified to represent the diverse interests of the NWAHA members.



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Susan Havard, Semmes, AL - Secretary

Susan has been riding gaited horses for her entire adult life and actively showing her grey TWH, Sir Albert, for the last 10 years. Her love is trail riding and versatility, especially gaited dressage, obstacles, and games. She is committed to promoting the versatility of the gaited horse. She has served as the Southeast Region Director for the last 3 years.

Regional Board of Directors

Shannon Gibbs, Angier, NC - Southeast Region Director

Shannon Gibbs was introduced to the Tennessee Walking Horse in 1993 at a local farm in NC and started showing them in 1994. Since then she has owned and shown multiple Tennessee Walking Horses, Spotted Saddle Horses, and Racking Horses. She obtained her NWA Judges License in 2012. She is involved with a NC based Gaited Horse Association, Four Beats for Pleasure and has served as their President in years past as well as serving as their Show Manager and Show Secretary for at least three shows per year. She also serves as a Show Secretary and Show Manager for other shows around Virginia and North Carolina. She served on the NWA Rule Committee in 2017. She often accompanies her husband to shows as his DQP Scribe. When she is not behind the Show Office Desk, she enjoys showing her two current horses in both rail and versatility classes



Kathee McGuire, Theodore, AL - Southeast Region Senior Director

Kathee started riding as a child, transitioning to gaited horses in 2004. She and her husband currently own Amazing Gaits Equestrian Center. She is passionate about helping riders and owners achieve their personal equestrian goals and dreams. Her farm mission also includes teaching equestrian safety and health while promoting fun. This passion and mission paved the way to understanding the versatility of the gaited horse and has made her an advocate for gaited breeds in general. She personally rides two TWHs and had developed a true love for gaited dressage as means to build the proper foundation for any discipline.



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John Nagel, Pentwater, MI - Northeast Region Director

John fell in love with walking horses in the early 80's while riding his grandpa's horses. In 2011 John became a lifetime member of NWAHA. Shortly after, John got his own TWH as an adult, Jose's Midnight Star. He now has 5 horses including a two year old debuting this year and Melody, who made her show ring appearance last year. He is excited about promoting the sound walking horse and can't wait to help NWAHA continue to grow.

Mag Ranft, Groveport, OH - Northeast Senior Region Director

Mag has been involved with Walking Horses since 1971 when introduced to them in college. Since then she has owned, trained, shown, bought, sold and raised many Tennessee Walking Horses. She was an Ohio TWHBEA Director for several terms and served on the Pleasure Committees for TWHBEA and WHOA. She is the long time President of the Mid-Ohio Walking Horse Association. In 2015, she became an NWAHA Board member and is devoted to the promotion of the sound flat shod Tennessee Walking Horse.



Kelly A. Johnston, Ypsilanti, MI – At-Large Director

Kelly purchased her first TWH in 2014 after over 30 years of trail riding stock horses and 3 back injuries. Much to the dismay of her husband and bank account, showing walking horses has become Kelly's main pursuit of happiness. She has found great pleasure and achievement showing her horses locally and nationally. Additionally, Kelly has competed successfully in open, local dressage shows and wants to begin training walking horses with dressage fundamentals. Kelly works as an art handler at the Detroit Institute of Arts, and is among a small group of people who are allowed to touch the artwork. Kelly holds an undergraduate degree in Art and Anthropology, and masters degrees in both Historic Preservation and Fine Arts. Take caution when conversing about these topics with Kelly. You may be subjected to hours long lectures. Kelly is also a nationally successful artist. She has exhibited and sold artwork from California to New York. Kelly is married to a wonderful husband, Mike, who knows better than to ask if he is more important than her horses. Kelly owns two walking horses: Joy's Real Deal (aka Raven), and The Big House (aka House).



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Jerry D. Ouellette, Chillicothe, IL - Central Region Director

Jerry D. Ouellette (pronounced: w uh - L EH T) and his wife Alena got involved with the Tennessee Walking Horses in 2010. Both fell in love with the breed while searching for riding lessons for their daughter and became involved with the Illinois Walking Horse Association (IWHA). Jerry joined their board in 2012 and has been the President of the organization since 2015. As President, he successfully worked to increase membership, sponsorship, and promote the TWH breed. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the IHPBEA and a member of the Wisconsin and Minnesota Walking Horse organizations. He is most proud of the accomplishments of the IWHA Youth Program. His passion for promoting the TWH breed and getting youth involved drives him and he loves both trail riding and showing.

Beth Jennings, Hemet, CA - Western Region Senior Director

After fifty years training most breeds and disciplines of horses and riders at all levels of equestrian contests from A to Z, Beth continues to train, breed, show and instruct plus exhibit at fairs/expos with her clients on their TWHs. She also trail rides both for fun and competitively in addition to arranging trail riding adventures for gaited horse enthusiasts, now sanctioning those events with NWAHA. Her main goal is to promote the joy of the sound, flat shod Walking Horse in all avenues of equestrian competition and individual use, while advocating the ideals of NWAHA.



Merleene Pacheco, McGregor, TX - At-Large Director

Merleene has ridden and shown in multiple disciplines since childhood. In 2000, following her enlistment in the Marine Corps and having two daughters she entered back into the horse world and in time opened her own boarding & lesson facility in Stafford, Virginia. It was during this time when her good friend, told her that "one day she would go gaited and never go back!" While still in Virginia, Pacheco traveled to NWAHA shows as a dressage scribe and her interest was stirred. Upon moving to Texas and meeting her husband, Leo, she stepped out into the gaited world. She is a CHA certified riding instructor and was the manager at Highlander Ranch, a local community college facility. This position fit well with her experience in event and office management, leadership, and personnel training. Merleene also served as Region 8 Director for Texas

Equestrian Trail Riders Association (TETRA). Merleene now owns and operates Fox Run Ranch standing her stallion, The Eternal Flame. Merleene & Leo hope to continue breeding outstanding quality walkers for show and trail. They also enjoy trail riding and showing their walkers and hope to share their love of horses with their eight grandchildren.