



Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic is the Pride of Ohio

by Betty Weibel

The 2018 Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic was a major success on many fronts. Exhibitors from around the country and beyond traveled to the Cleveland Metroparks Polo Field in Moreland Hills to fill stalls and entries. New and long-time spectators turned out to support the show, and sponsors helped to make the dream show a reality. From the Schneider Saddlery Opening Weekend presented by Chagrin Valley Farms, to the closing highlight, the \$50,000 Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund Cleveland Grand Prix, volunteers worked hard to pull it all off.

Before the show was over the organizers, the Board of Trustees of the Chagrin Valley PHA Horse Shows Inc., were already making plans for improvements for next year when the show returns July 4 through 14, 2019. Volunteers can sign up to help out on advance committees or to make plans to work the show next summer. For more information about volunteer opportunities please visit:

ChagrinHunterJumperClassic.org.

In order to appreciate this gem of Ohio's horse show world, you need to look back at its rich heritage and how the show helped put Ohio on the map as a major player in the national and international horse show world.

History of the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic

The Chagrin show started in 1949 as an annual charity horse show organized by the Chagrin Valley Trails and Riding Club at the Cleveland Metroparks Polo Field. It was a two-day, all-breed event, that included both English and Western classes, to raise money for the club's activities and clubhouse maintenance. The hunter and jumper classes at the show gained huge popularity, and by the 1960s, the event evolved into one of the largest hunter/jumper shows in the nation. Exhibitors from around the country were traveling to Cleveland to attend the show.

The huge growth of the show left the club struggling

to keep up. In 1965, the club transferred the horse show and management to the Chagrin Valley Professional Horseman's Association. The show was then called the Chagrin Valley PHA Horse Show.

Shortly after this change, Laddie Andahazy, a local Clevelander and director of Lake Erie College's riding program, approached the show leaders about the concept of a grand prix jumping competition. The riding Andahazy had seen at the 1936 Olympic Games in Germany inspired him to bring this same kind of high-level competition to the United States.

Coincidentally, Andahazy's presentation caught the interest of Dr. Jerry Baker, an equestrian with the U.S. Army Team as well as stable manager and trainer to J. Basil Ward of Cleveland. Ward committed to sponsoring the grand prix and offered a \$3,000 purse. Thus, the Cleveland Grand Prix – the first grand prix held in North America – was born.

Over its 70-year lifetime, the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic has faced many challenges including competition date conflicts, board reorganizations, and the biggest challenge: weather. The Chagrin River has flooded the stable areas and surrounding roads in the past, and jumps have even floated away! In 2003, the Grand Prix was forced to move from the grass field of the Metroparks Polo Field to the all-weather ring because of the poor footing.

Of the thousands of shows in the country, the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic is one of 25 horse shows to have earned the U.S. Equestrian Federation's designation of Heritage Competition. Today, the purse for the Cleveland Grand Prix has grown to \$50,000. The show attracts over 600 horses from 30 states and multiple countries. Notably, the show contributes nearly \$3 million to the local economy and attracts close to 10,000 spectators.

What started as a small charity show is now one of great historic milestones and innovations of the equine industry, and its mission is threefold: to run a first-class competition, raise money for charity, and educate the public. ♦

—If you'd like to read more about its history, check out *The Cleveland Grand Prix: An American Show Jumping First* by Betty Weibel, available in book stores and Amazon.com.

For more information: ClevelandGrandPrix.com/ ChagrinHunterJumperClassic.org.