

# ELK RAPIDS NEWS

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PHOTO BY LISA LIRONES

ACME TOWNSHIP

## Horseshows by the Bay leaps into 2010 season

*By Samantha Tengelitsch, Correspondent*

The 7th season of the Horseshows by the Bay Equestrian Festival is underway at Flintfields Park off Bates Rd. in Williamsburg. Fifteen hundred horses, along with their owners and trainers, are expected to arrive in the next four weeks to compete in one of several disciplines featured at the festival.

The festival will add a fifth week of events this year following the announcement Flintfields Park was chosen by the United States Dressage Federation for the 2010 Region 2 Championships slated to run September 10th-12th.

### THE SPANISH HORSE & STALLIONS

During a press event last week at the park, Horseshows Founder Alex Rheinheimer thanked Hampton Green Farm owner, Kimberly VanKampen Boyer. Rheinheimer said VanKampen has been instrumental in recent improvements made to the park, including a new pavilion built in VanKampen's father's honor.

Hampton Green specializes in the *Pura Raza Espanola* (PRE), or "pure race" Spanish horse. VanKampen said she believes the PRE horse is the ideal horse for dressage because "it was the breed for which the sport was designed." The PRE horse, also known as the Andalusian, was developed in southern Spain in the 16th century, where, according to VanKampen, riders began taking war moves and converting them into high court entertainment. It was during this time the sport of dressage was born.

As the breed was developed for appearance over athleticism, the stronger German- and northern European-bred horses overshadowed the Spanish horse. A more recent shift by breeders back toward athleticism led VanKampen to consider the breed for dressage.

"I went to Spain when no one in dressage was going to Spain and looking at horses," VanKampen said the PRE horse was regarded as more of a "novelty" at the time. "I saw some wonderful horses and thought this is



**PRE stallions tend to be gentler and more social than other breed stallions. Said Hampton Green stallion trainer, Maria Lithander (pictured here), "They're all wonderful horses; all individuals. Hopefully they'll behave."**

Photo by Samantha Tengelitsch

something that can really catch on in the United States." VanKampen believes the success of the horse is dependent on future breeding. "We're not breeding for beauty first; we're breeding for sport."

In addition to the breed, the use of stallions at horseshows is becoming increasingly common. PRE stallions, according to VanKampen, are "known for their sensibility and gentleness. You're able to keep stallions together. They are very social and easy to handle horses if you know basic stallion rules."

Maria Lithander, stallion trainer for Hampton Green Farm, agreed, "Usually you don't drive into a show with six stallions on your truck. That's just not something you

do." She added, "You have to have the education to know how to handle them and keep away from other people – you have to have the consideration of the other people." Of the PRE stallions in her care, "They're all wonderful horses; all individuals. Hopefully they'll behave."

Of the breed, "I've ridden every breed there is in dressage and loved many of them, but I started riding more PREs, and fell in love with them."

Maria Lithander began her "pony training" at seven in Sweden, where her passion for horses eventually launched her into a professional career.

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Hampton Green Trainer Maria Lithander riding Idilio.



Horse Show continued from cover



**PRE Stallion Idilio arches his neck while being prepped for riding at Horseshows by the Bay last week. The purebred Spanish breed was the first to be used in the sport of dressage, when riders began converting war moves into a form of court-entertainment as early as the 16th century. "Usually you don't drive into a show with six stallions on your truck. That's not something you do," said trainer, Maria Lithander of the unique use of PRE stallions at this year's Horseshows by the Bay. "You have to have the education to know how to handle them."**

Photos by Samantha Tengelitsch

Lithander spent time in Brazil, where she showed successfully both nationally and internationally. She later moved to Mexico, where she won over 60 National and Regional Championships and worked as a trainer for riders at all skill levels.

#### **ACCIDENT INSPIRES USE OF HELMETS IN HIGH-LEVEL DRESSAGE**

Lithander's teammate and Michigan native, Courtney King Dye, suffered a fall during a March 3rd training session. The Olympic dressage rider fractured her skull and was in a coma for several weeks. Though making steady progress, the incident drew attention to the deficient use of helmets in high-level dressage competition.

Lithander, who is riding two of Courtney King Dye's horses while she recovers, said she now wears a helmet while riding and sees other riders following suit as a result of the awareness King's accident has brought to the competition; "There are a lot of riders now who are wearing their helmets in the FEI (*Federation Equestre Internationale*) levels and I think it's important we do it to give the younger riders an example."

#### **MICHIGAN IDEAL FOR HORSES**

VanKampen said the cooler climate along with the good grains grown throughout the summer make Michigan an ideal place to raise horses. She also cited the convenience of larger universities with equine facilities to her farm and the show.

"When I first heard about this show, I thought this is fantastic; this could really grow," said VanKampen of the festival's location. "Michigan is a well-kept secret and I think for horse-people to get out of the heat and to come someplace and have a wonderful location – I'm thrilled to be a part of what's happening here. Michigan is near and dear to my family."

Lithander said it is a relief to come to a show where the focus is not solely on competition, but also on the families who accompany riders. "I love this place. It's for everybody. It's a big show, but people are friendly here. That's what makes a show successful, that it's inviting, that it's friendly, that people want to come back and bring their horses."

– *Horseshows by the Bay* will run through August 1st at Flintfields Park on Bates Road in Williamsburg. For more information, visit [horseshowsbythebay.com](http://horseshowsbythebay.com)