

Anna Lloyd

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very proud of her accomplishments.

Riding a hunter pony is more than simply hopping into the saddle and sailing happily over a few fences, Anna and Elizabeth said.

"They have rules for everything," Anna said. "The rider can't be too tall or short for the size of the pony. The judges even take note of your riding attire and your pony's appearance - its mane must be neatly braided, for example."

The pony's height is officially registered on a permanent record card which goes to all shows, she added. Height is important because different sized ponies jump different fences in competition.

"It's actually an athletic competition, with you and your pony working together as a team. You must have your hands, legs, back and body placed correctly at certain times while the pony is jumping," Anna said.

The fences must be taken in a specific sequence called the course, which all riders must walk through and memorize before the competition.

"It's very serious business," Anna said. "Everyone is very dis-

"It's very serious business. Everyone is very disciplined, very focused."

Anna Lloyd
Champion rider

ciplined, very focused."

The Back Mountain is a very strong area for riding, with many interested and enthusiastic riders, Elizabeth said. "Many people show their horses on the different show circuits," she added.

When Anna first set her goal of making the AHSA pony finals, she wasn't apprehensive. "I didn't know what to expect or that it was such a big deal," she said, laughing. "It was more like an adventure."

Ayers's youngest riding student at the time, she and Shenandoah Artist, whom the Loyds rented from a breeder, were known around his barn as "the kid and the pony."

Anna competed in 18 shows last year, sandwiching riding les-

sons two or three times a week and competitions in nearby states into her school schedule. An eighth grader at the Dallas Middle School, she is an honor roll student.

"It's a two-hour ride to Doylestown. I studied in the car a lot," Anna said.

"There are fewer distractions that way - no TV or friends calling on the phone," Elizabeth joked.

Driving several hundred miles to lessons and shows every week takes a great commitment and lots of careful budgeting of both time and money. To help out, Anna does lots of chores at home and in the barn.

"I don't have much of a social life right now," she said.

In order to qualify for the AHSA finals, riders must be champions or reserve champions at A-2 horse shows, the highest-rated AHSA shows in the nation. Shows of this caliber aren't held locally.

Competing against riders from all across the country, Anna did very well in the pony finals, scoring in the top 50 percent.

In contrast to the pressures of competing in shows, "the pony finals were fun," Anna said. "They had parties and barbecues and I got to know the other riders and

"The best way to start out is with a kind mount who is forgiving of the rider's mistakes."

Elizabeth Lloyd
Anna's mother, and teacher

class winners."

Although it's officially hers, Anna will have to wait to collect her trophy. The recent heavy snowfalls forced the AHSA to cancel the awards banquet in Valley Forge until March.

Now that she has outgrown Shenandoah Artist, who returned to his breeder to find another rider, Anna has a horse of her own. Jet Set is an eight-year-old Thoroughbred hunter whose job is to teach her how to ride in the horse divisions, with their faster pace and larger jumps.

"Jet and I make a good team," Anna said. "He's a big kitten - very laid-back and gentle."

It will take her about six months

to become accustomed to the gentle gelding and his longer strides.

"I'm not on a time schedule this year," she said. "We're just enjoying each other's company."

"The best way to start out is with a kind mount who is forgiving of the rider's mistakes," Elizabeth added.

Anna's accomplishment will be written up in the national riding magazine, *The Chronicle of the Horse*.

Although her present goal is to have fun getting to know Jet Set, Anna said she hopes some day to have a small horse farm and to train riders as her mother has done.

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