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NEWS RELEASE

Pride comes full circle for Circle J Miniatures at Canadian National show

CALGARY – For Charlene Gale, it’s all about show and tell. She doesn’t mind if others are showing — as long as plenty more are doing the telling.

Charlene’s father, Merv Giles, started the Circle J Ranches miniature horse program near Cochrane, Alta., in 1981. More than three decades later, Circle J has established a sterling international reputation for its crackerjack bloodlines — because in the winner’s circle, notes Charlene, the name game is everything.

“We do show some of our horses ourselves, but not as extensively as some of the other people that have purchased them. We’re very pleased with what they’ve done with our horses — they’re our best advertising,” she says.

The regional highlight of the miniature show season, the Canadian National Miniature Horse Show, wrapped up a three-day run at the Calgary Stampede on Thursday, with nearly 90 classes held at the Northern Lights Arena and under the Big Top.

The Circle J Miniatures program has seen numerous triumphs and accolades since Merv and Claudia, Charlene’s mom, brought back a trio of miniature weanlings from a trip through the United States in the fall of 1981. One of those three, Martin’s Bunny, was the mother of three minis now owned by Calgarians Louise and Kim Locke’s Hurricane Hill Miniatures — Circle J Buster Bo, Circle J Champ’s Li’l Chief, and Circle J Bunanza — that are known informally as the Amazing Bunny Brothers and have gone on to a spectacular string of success in the show ring.

Last fall, at the American Miniature Horse Association’s 2011 world championship at Fort Worth, Texas, 23-year-old Circle J Buster Bo brought home more laurels with victory in the Amateur Obstacle Driving class. Circle J Golden Phoenix, now owned by Karrie Lynn Hoke of Phoenix, Ariz., was crowned a world champ in the Solid Color Stallions and Geldings class. Circle J Duchess, another show-ring stalwart owned by the Lockes, was fifth in Amateur Obstacle Driving, fifth in Open Obstacle Driving, and fourth in Golden Showmanship. And a recent career retrospective in *Miniature Horse World* magazine of Circle J Renegade Wind, owned by Marcia and Jimmie Sizemore of Scottsdale, Ariz., notes that the little gelding already has AMHA Champion Halter Horse and Amateur Superior Halter Horse titles, along with 23 grand champion designations, through its illustrious career to date.

Merv, who drove a United Farmers of Alberta eight-horse hitch of miniatures for years, was involved in this year’s Stampede parade driving a four-horse hitch. Charlene and her daughter Kendra Gale now operate the breeding, training, and showing programs for Circle J Miniatures, whose herd stands at about 40 head after peaking with as many as 80 animals over the years.

“Kendra got an e-mail recently from a woman in France; a mare we had sold a long time ago has turned up in France, and is raising foals over there,” says Charlene. “And I guess there’s a stallion standing in Germany, or was until recently, that came from our place. Those are gratifying stories to hear.”

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Another product of the Circle J Miniatures program – Circle J Jesse James, now owned and shown by Samantha Birch of Blackie, Alta. – was named reserve champion in the single pleasure driving horse category during the 2012 Canadian National show.

“What hooked me was driving our first team of mares. I still like driving teams best of all,” says Charlene. “And this pursuit has been great for my kids. They learned how to win and lose gracefully. They’ve talked about the horses so much that they’re entirely comfortable speaking in public. I think it’s been wonderful for them.”

About 80 miniature horses – which max out at 34 inches tall – from across Alberta and British Columbia were entered at the AMHA-sanctioned Canadian National show in an assortment of classes, including hunter/jumper, obstacle, halter, in-hand jumping, roadster, pleasure driving, log drag, and more.

While they’re small, miniature horses are surprisingly strong, a product of their traditional breeding purpose. “They were originally used to pull carts of the coal mines in England. That’s where their strength comes from. They could probably pull as much or more than a large horse, based on a factor of their own weight,” says Wally Patterson, who chairs the Stampede’s Miniature Horse committee. “Older people and kids just love ‘em, because they’re so approachable. And people are usually surprised at how talented they are, and all the things they can do.”

Calgary’s K.C. Pappas, who heads up First Knight Miniatures, is once again the proud owner of the Canadian National Supreme Halter Horse, or overall champion of the show. This year, First Knight Striders Black Satin took top honours.

Other 2012 Canadian National class grand champions were named as follows: HCM Warpaint’s Feelin’ Groovy, owned by Locke, in both roadster driving horse and country pleasure driving horse; WCR Regalaire, owned by Little L Acres SKR Farm of Millet, Alta., and handled by Dawn Labine, in single pleasure driving horse; First Knight Striders Black Satin in junior halter mare; Pappas’ First Knight Striders Shadow Fax in junior halter stallion; Little L Acres’ SKR Whodini in junior halter gelding; WCR My Roxy Roller, owned by Royal Fleet Miniatures of Waskatenau, Alta., and handled by Marj Brown, in both senior halter mare and classic pleasure driving horse; Triple K Boogies Buckeroo 4 You, owned by Showtyme Miniatures of Tomahawk, Alta., and handled by Rosemarie Poynter-Jubb, in senior halter stallion; and JC’s It’s a Snap, owned by Yvonne Campbell of Spruce Grove, Alta., and handled by Dali Campbell, in senior halter gelding.

Other 2012 Canadian National class reserve champions were: Little L Acres’ WCR Regalaire in roadster driving horse; Little L Acres’ WCR Catmandu in country pleasure driving horse and senior halter gelding; Pappas’ First Knights Platinum Princess in junior halter mare; Showtyme Miniatures’ Showtymes Rock My World in junior halter stallion; Scott Creek Monarch Caruso, owned by KJ Miniatures of Airdrie, Alta., and handled by Kate Jelinski, in junior halter gelding; Imprint Diors Pretty in Prada, owned by Hol Wil Miniatures of Tomahawk, Alta., and handled by Holly Whyte, in senior halter mare; Imprint Red Ruble, owned by Imprint Miniatures of Okotoks, Alta., and handled by Randy McGowan, in senior halter stallion; and Hidden Timbers Comanche Spook, owned by Lunde Miniatures of Airdrie, Alta., and handled by Judy Lunde, in classic pleasure driving horse.

Following the 2012 Stampede, groundbreaking will begin on the Agrium Western Event Centre, the largest project in Stampede history.



For details and artistic renderings of this magnificent 150,000-square-foot agriculture showcase and competition venue, scheduled for completion in 2014, visit <http://corporate.calgarystampede.com/about/park-development/agrium-western-event-centre/>

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The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit www.calgarystampede.com.