

## First Place, 14-18

Ginny Carulli, Paris, PA, Age 17

### The Appaloosa: My Breed of Choice

Sitting in the saddle, feeling the smooth rhythm underneath me that I have grown greatly accustomed to and fond of, I knew we had won that class. My horse that year was a registered Appaloosa gelding named Zippo's Captain, who I named Scout. It was our first year at the county fair together and I did not know if he had previous show experience or not. He did spectacular and we took home four trophies. He and I took first in Western Horse Showmanship, Western Horsemanship, Trail Horse, and Horse Versatility at the Jefferson County Fair, Ohio, in 2008. We also took English Equitation High Point Award at the Steubenville Saddle Club that year. It was the first year I won any competition with a horse.

In late 2007, when my parents informed me they planned on buying me a horse, I started my search immediately. Of course, at fourteen, without the best riding experience backing me up, I was not completely aware of what I was looking for. I recall my first thought, "I do not want a sorrel or chestnut colored horse. There are too many of those around here." I did not want a quarter horse either, because I am one of those people who strays from the crowd. I did not want a horse that was popular in this area. Looking back now, I realize that this thought of buying a horse based solely on color was slightly unreasonable; nevertheless, I am happy I kept to that motivation. I am a unique person with a unique personality and I wanted a horse to match my disposition. I knew an Appaloosa was perfect for the job. In January 2008, just after my fifteenth birthday, I knew the moment I set sight on that bay roan Appaloosa gelding with the small black and white spots on his rump, that he would be the one.

His owner said that I could change his name. When I told her I liked "Scout" she replied, "I'll start calling him that now, so he can get used to it." We took a second trip up just two weeks after to make our final payment and bring him home. I knew we had some wonderful God-given bond awaiting us that February morning when I got out of the car and called, "Scout!" He immediately walked out of the barn and came right to me. That name switch just proves the intense level of intelligence Appaloosas have. I have owned Scout for three years now and these years have been the best and also hardest to live through. Zippo's Captain and I had great successes as well as devastating traumas. In 2009, we won first in three of our county fair classes and earned the Saddle Club High Point awards in Halter and Horsemanship. In 2010, we earned

Saddle Club High Point awards in Showmanship, English Equitation, and Trail. But we went through issues with his feet and legs and we never truly understood his many health issues. In May 2010, my mother drove him to the hospital and the doctor diagnosed him with Navicular Disease.

Everything about this wondrous Appaloosa, Scout, pulled me through each experience and taught me strength, wisdom, courage, and determination. Our experiences illustrated to me that what I want to do most with my life is to work with horses, this breed especially. The reason I believe this breed is the best choice for me is because of his enduring strength to pull through this disease. He fights his pain and overcomes it, I believe, all for me. He is a fantastic horse who has done miracles before my eyes. Training Scout has shown me how to treat horses even better and taught me to patience and understanding. This past week, when I got out of surgery, he was all I wanted, the only thing I called out for. I do not think I will be able to have that kind of strong relationship with any other horse, let alone a different breed. There have been so many times that he has had a long layoff, and when I go back out to ride him and bring him back in shape, he never fails to do exactly as I ask. Everything he does for me he does very responsively. He even picks up quickly on new things. I believe this is a trait characteristic of the Appaloosa breed. It just comes naturally to them, especially Scout, to think everything through thoroughly. I feel, without this horse, I honestly would lose the will to do anything productive. The Appaloosa has such spirit, endurance, and power not just physically but mentally. They are stubborn, but so am I, and I relate greatly with this attitude. Scout and Other Appaloosas I have worked with are always willing to please and eager to learn. Scout's people-oriented attitude makes me feel like I have a much stronger connection with him than most other people have with their horses. They are strong mentally and physically. You can see in their eyes and bodies how they work out a problem or situation. These horses are colorful inside and out. The orey-eyes show human emotion, which is very vivid and vibrant, and really connects them with people. Even the solid-colored Appaloosas have such intense influence on people, like their spotted brothers and sisters. Anyone can tell an Appaloosa just by his or her distinct personality and attitudes. I want to show everyone that the Appaloosa is my breed of choice for many amazing reasons and that there should be more of them in everyone's barn.