

# Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic Offers Students Learning Opportunities

## Perspectives from the press box

By Cheyenne Lord (Centenary University Class of 2018)



The press box at the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic.

Anyone working or volunteering in the horse industry knows about the hard work and long hours that goes into horse sports. But what you may not know is a similar amount of work goes on behind the scenes at the horse shows you attend.

Volunteers are the backbone of the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic (CHJC) in Moreland Hills, Ohio, from managing special events like Family Day and benefits, to handling vendors, and working to increase publicity. Hosted at the Cleveland Metroparks Polo Field nearly every July since 1949, the CHJC is run by an all-volunteer Board of Trustees from the Chagrin Valley Professional Horsemen's Association.

In 2018, former Co-Chairman Betty Weibel was volunteering her public relations expertise to assist the CHJC and Marketing Committee Chairman Sally Koepke to promote the horse show. Betty posted a notice of an internship opportunity on the American Horse Publications website. That is how I came from the Jersey Shore to work on an Ohio horse show in Betty's public relations agency office.

As a working student at several barns in central and southern New Jersey and competitor in hunter/jumper shows across New Jersey and New York for years, I planned to pursue a career in the equine industry early during high school. I went to Centenary University to study equestrian communications, and Betty's internship was the perfect chance for me to get more experience in the field the summer before I graduated.

Even though I occasionally volunteered at local horse shows (usually as a groom or gatekeeper), there was more to working my internship with the CHJC than I realized.

The role of media officer included working with local newspapers, online media and equestrian publications to create advance stories to promote the show. I wrote news releases and media advisories, collected fun facts and photos for social media posts, and organized the scripts for daily public announcements in the jumper and hunter rings. I also worked with another intern from Yopko Penhallurick (Betty's public relations agency) to develop a spectator survey, wrote the Cleveland Grand Prix results story for the *Chagrin Valley Times* newspaper, and provided a full media results report at the end of the show.

It was a lot of work, but it was a great experience. I got to see a side of horse showing that few people see, and I still had moments when I could just sit and enjoy watching a class.



Cheyenne and a Plain Dealer reporter interview 2018 Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund Cleveland Grand Prix winner Taylor Land.

I have since graduated from Centenary with a bachelor's degree in Communication, minoring in Equine Studies, and began working in the eventing discipline through Irish Manor Stables (Stockton, NJ). I was also lucky enough to be invited back to the CHJC to serve as the 2019 Media Officer, so I worked remotely on horse show assignments like writing program stories through the spring before returning to Chagrin Falls in July to work onsite for the show.

---

## Volunteering at a charity horse show

By Sophia Balunek (Kenston High School  
Class of 2021)

Competing at the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic (CHJC) is big undertaking. Volunteering to help the horse show on top of that is an even greater task however, I was able to do both this year.



Sophia competes during the CHJC. Peter Balunek photo.

Before the horse show began, I was asked by Betty Weibel to volunteer at the show's final events to help assist with publicity. During the show I rode with Heather Froehlich-Cortell and showed in the Children's Hunters and Intermediate Children's Jumpers on my lease horse, My New Beau.

With the information that Betty and Cheyenne Lord provided before the event, I felt very comfortable with what my job was and how to complete it. During the International Hunter Derby and Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund Cleveland Grand Prix, I scribed notes on the riders and their horses as they competed – details about the horse and rider the announcer shared, as well as scores and how they did in the class. My notes helped Cheyenne Lord write her articles and news releases as well as identify photographs when media called to ask what horse and rider they had photographed.

At the conclusion of both classes I was able to join in on a press conference with the winners. After the Derby, Cheyenne and I walked back to the barn with Kelley Farmer and listened to her describe her winning mount Consent and the three other horses she showed that night.

After the Grand Prix on Sunday, we talked to winner Ali Wolff and second place Filip de Wandel in the tent beside the jumper ring. It was a fun and informational experience to hear how the riders felt competing in such a high stakes event.

It was interesting to hear about how certain parts of the show came together and who is behind the scenes making it happen. I also learned that because the CHJC is a nonprofit event, my work qualified for my high school's community service hours and credit. Next year, I hope to volunteer again and take on more tasks with the media.



## Opportunities available for school and community service credit

The publicity committee is not the only area where volunteers can support the Chagrin Hunter Jumper Classic. Students interested in business, marketing, sports management, hospitality, development/fundraising and education will find related jobs at the horse show where they can gain experience that will add to a resume or college application. Volunteers who are 16 and older will also find jobs that qualify for community service credit due to the horse show's nonprofit status. For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit the [horse show website](#) or contact [info@clevelandhorseshow.com](mailto:info@clevelandhorseshow.com).