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Talking Capital Challenge With Patricia Griffith

Patricia Griffith became a working student at Andre Dignelli's Heritage Farm in 1997 and by the year's end, she rode to the Reserve Championship at the USET Talent Search Finals. Shortly thereafter, she joined the Heritage team as a professional and has worked alongside Andre for more than 25 years. Over the years, she has enjoyed developing young horses and has produced a few grand prix horses along the way.

Spearheading Heritage Farm's pony program, Patricia has coached numerous USEF Pony Finals Champions, five USEF Pony Medal Final winners, and has won the Emerson Burr Perpetual Trainer's Award five times. As a licensed USEF "R" judge, she also enjoys judging officiating at shows each year.

Q: How long have you been attending the Capital Challenge Horse Show?

A: Twenty-eight years. I've been at Heritage Farm for 28 years, and we've gone every year.



Patricia Griffith with Tara Metzner at the 2011 Capital Challenge Horse Show. Photo by [Jump Media](#)

Q: What's your favorite memory from showing at the Capital Challenge?

A: I won the [World Championship Hunter Rider] Professional Challenge in 2008, and it was special for me because I had the honor of riding a very special horse, Vida Blue. She was honored about two years ago as the winner of the Gray Slipper Award. She was a special horse, and that class is a very special class to win. I'm honored to be on the list of people who won it.



Patricia Griffith and Vida Blue showing incredible form in the 2008 WCHR Professional Challenge. Photo by [Jump Media](#)

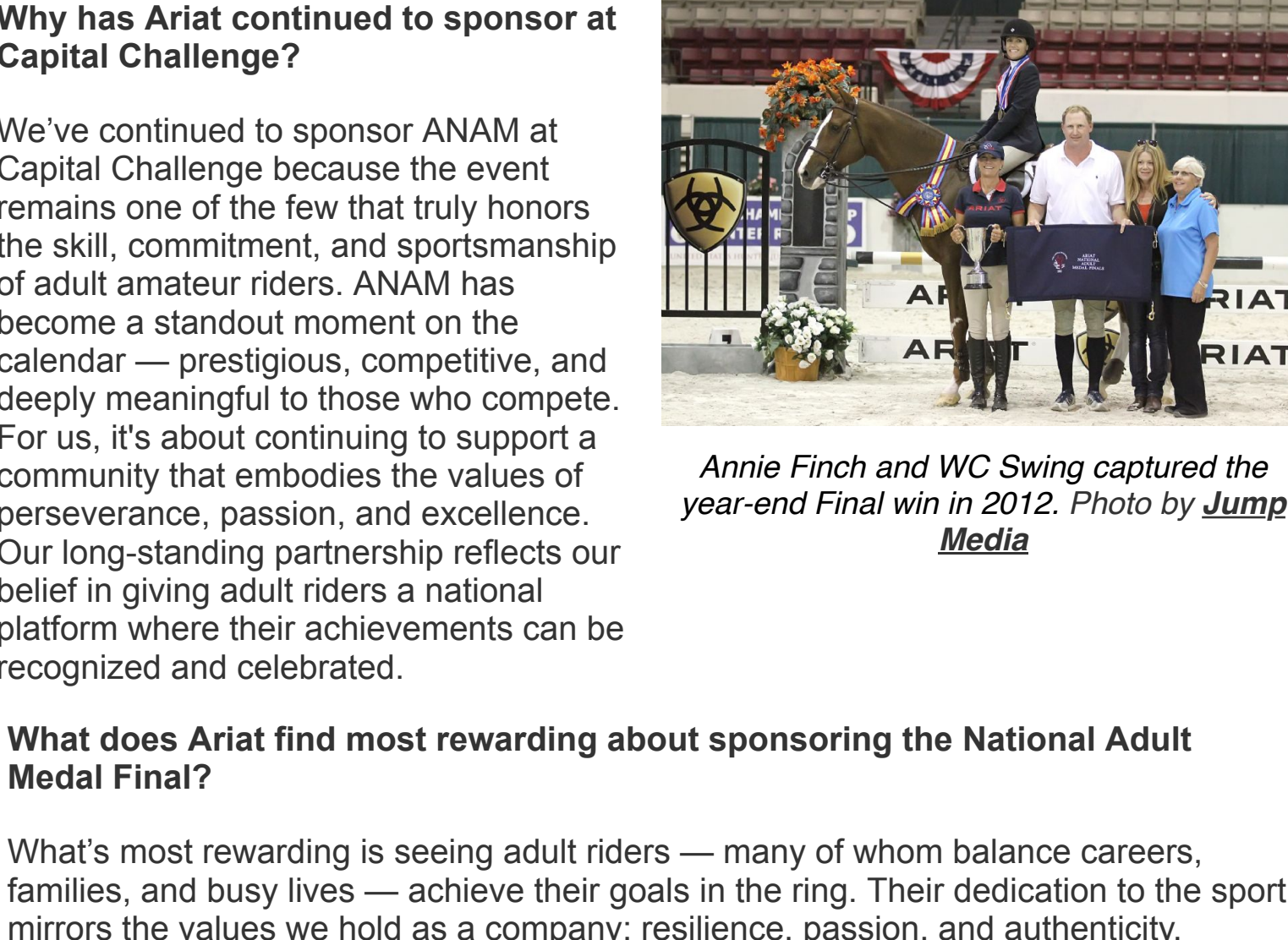


Patricia Griffith and Vida Blue smile for the camera following their victory in the 2008 WCHR Professional Challenge. Photo by [Jump Media](#)

Q: How does showing at the Capital Challenge Horse Show help your students develop as riders?

A: I think the added pressure is significant. Not every show brings that kind of pressure, and this is one of the four or five shows where you get the feeling that it's a real championship. You have to give it your all because when you show up, whoever performs the best will be crowned the champion.

The presentations and awards at Capital Challenge make it feel more special. I think the show is also on many of my students' lists of favorites, so I think everyone is trying to do their best there.

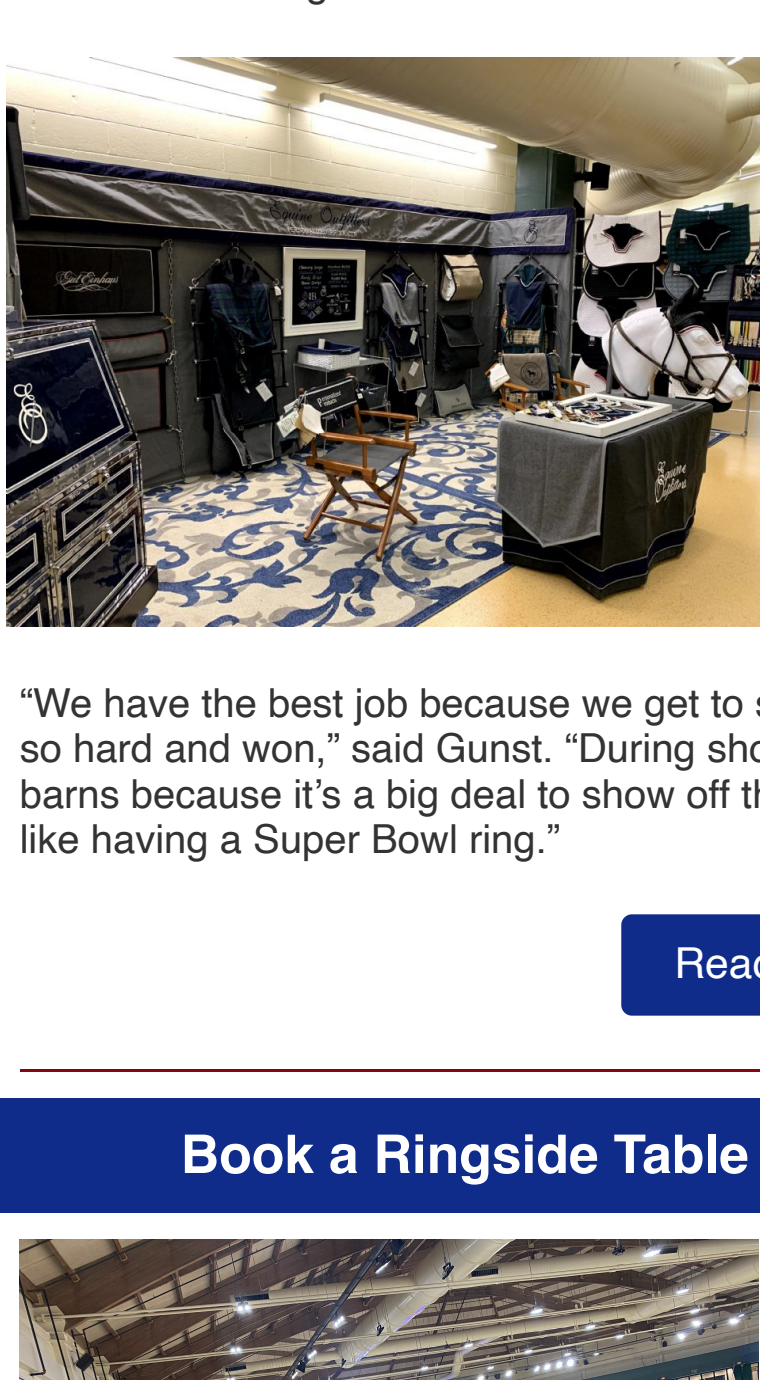


Patricia Griffith (third from left) and the Heritage Farm team join Lillie Keenan and Cleanway in their winning presentation in the 2012 PBIA North American Junior Equitation Championships. Photo by [Jump Media](#)

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Recognizing Diamond Sponsor, Ariat International

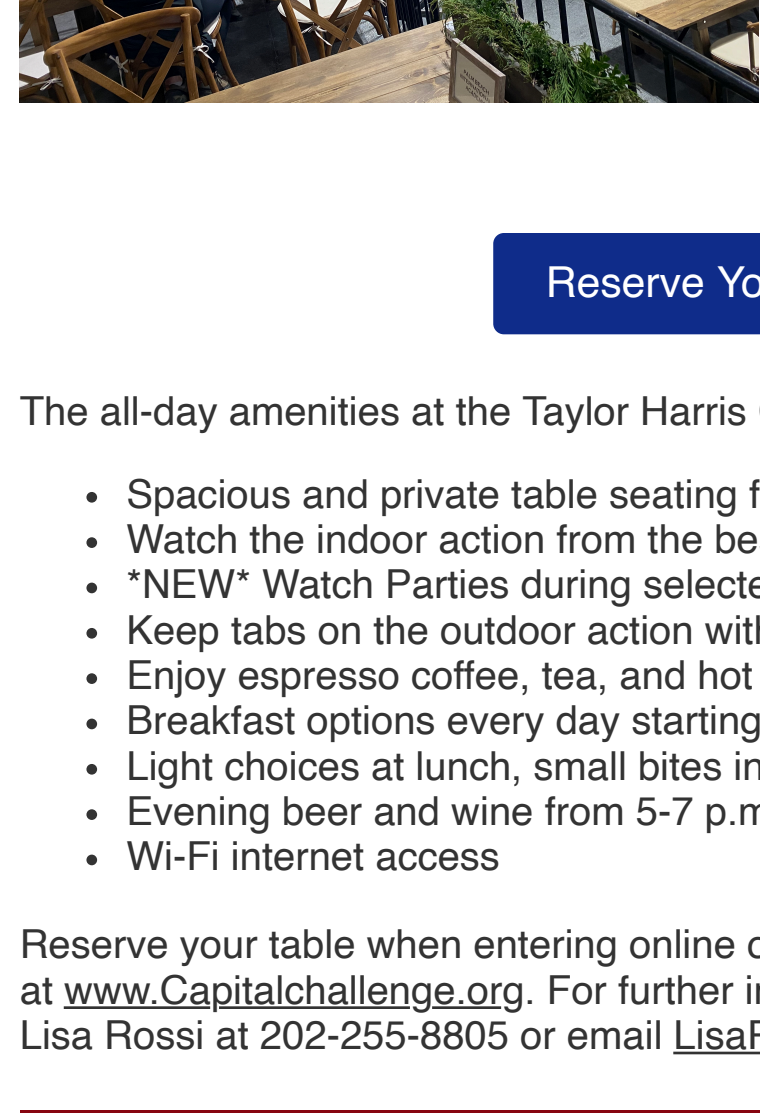
We spoke with Susan Alcala, Vice President, Partnership Marketing at Ariat International, about how the company first got involved at the Capital Challenge Horse Show, sponsoring the Ariat National Adult Medal Final, which has year-long qualifying classes, and why Ariat is such a vital part of the event's success.



An early winner of the Ariat National Adult Medal Final was Olivia Martin in 2002. Photo courtesy of CCHS

Why did Ariat become an early sponsor at Capital Challenge?

Ariat became an early sponsor at Capital Challenge because we saw an opportunity to support a passionate and often under-recognized group within the equestrian world: adult amateur riders. As a young company in the early 1990s, we were committed to building meaningful relationships within the riding community. When the Capital Challenge team approached us in 1995 with the idea of creating a dedicated equitation final for adult amateurs, we were immediately on board. The result was the Ariat National Adult Medal (ANAM) Final — an event created to give adult amateurs the spotlight they deserve and to celebrate their dedication to the sport.



Annie Finch and WC Swing captured the year-end Final win in 2012. Photo by [Jump Media](#)

Why has Ariat continued to sponsor at Capital Challenge?

We've continued to sponsor ANAM at Capital Challenge because the event remains one of the few that truly honors the skill, commitment, and sportsmanship of adult amateur riders. ANAM has become a standout moment on the calendar — prestigious, competitive, and deeply meaningful to those who compete. For us, it's about continuing to support a community that embodies the values of perseverance, passion, and excellence. Our long-standing partnership reflects our belief in giving adult riders a national platform where their achievements can be recognized and celebrated.

What does Ariat find most rewarding about sponsoring the National Adult Medal Final?

What's most rewarding is seeing adult riders — many of whom balance careers, families, and busy lives — achieve their goals in the ring. Their dedication to the sport mirrors the values we hold as a company: resilience, passion, and authenticity. Sponsoring the Ariat National Adult Medal Final allows us to honor those riders in a way that feels truly meaningful. It's not just about competition; it's about recognizing the spirit of the adult amateur community and celebrating everything they bring to the sport.

Vendor Spotlight: Personalized Products and Equine Outfitters

When Carrie Gunst started Personalized Products in 1988, she had only a folding table and a brass engraver. She sold name plates and Walsh halters at horse shows, taking her operation from its base in Hartford, WI, to venues across the Midwest. As her business expanded, so did the store. Gunst invested in more machinery, larger trailers to travel to shows, opened a brick-and-mortar shop as she expanded her range of customizable tack and apparel, and launched Equine Outfitters, a line of horse clothing.

"It took me until 1990 to get my first embroidering machine. I had a small 20-foot, pull-behind trailer that I bought by cashing in my savings bonds from all my aunts and uncles. I took the old farm truck and started going to horse shows with my manual engraver and my little one-needle embroidery machine," recalled Gunst, explaining that now, her business boasts 25 embroidery machines, nine sewing machines, and a 44-foot mobile rig.



Personalized Products has been a staple at the Capital Challenge Horse Show since 1995, supplying the show's branded souvenirs and award prizes. Every championship rider and their groom also receive a certificate to their booth, redeemable for a CCHS jacket or article of clothing that Gunst or her assistant, Charlotte Ruff, will help customize.

"We have the best job because we get to see all these great people who have worked so hard and won," said Gunst. "During show week, it gets very competitive among the barns because it's a big deal to show off that you won at the Capital Challenge. It's like having a Super Bowl ring."

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Book a Ringside Table in the Taylor Harris Club



By reserving a private VIP table at the Taylor Harris Club, you and up to five others can watch every class, every day, while enjoying all-day amenities, a place to spread out, and refuge from the hustle and bustle when things get busy.

The Taylor Harris Club will host Watch Parties on selected finals nights, with dinner and a full bar while you watch the action. Tables are limited, and reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, so book your table today.

[Reserve Your Table Now](#)

The all-day amenities at the Taylor Harris Club include:

- Spacious and private table seating for six, or high-top tables for four
- Watch the indoor action from the best seats at the horse show
- "NEW" Watch Parties during selected evenings with dinner and open bar
- Keep tabs on the outdoor action with big-screen monitors
- Enjoy espresso coffee, tea, and hot and cold beverages all day
- Breakfast options every day starting bright and early
- Light choices at lunch, small bites in the evenings, and all-day snacks
- Evening beer and wine from 5-7 p.m.
- Wi-Fi internet access

Reserve your table when entering online or from the "Ringside Tables" tab at www.CapitalChallenge.org. For further information or to reserve directly, call or text Lisa Rossi at 202-255-8805 or email LisaRossi@CapitalChallenge.org.



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US EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION HERITAGE COMPETITION

About the Capital Challenge Horse Show

The Capital Challenge Horse Show, an official USEF Heritage Competition, has a distinct and unique focus on preeminent hunter and equitation competition. The 2025 edition of the Capital Challenge Horse Show will take place from September 24-October 5. The 12 days of competition include prestigious equitation events, Jumper divisions, the World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Finals, the Green Hunter North American Championships, and more, with many of the country's best horses and riders competing in junior, amateur, and professional divisions.

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