

West Point High alumna to compete in national quarter horse contest

Carlie Massie shows her grandfather's horse Dot, whose registered show name is My Dots Hot. (Courtesy of Carlie Massie)

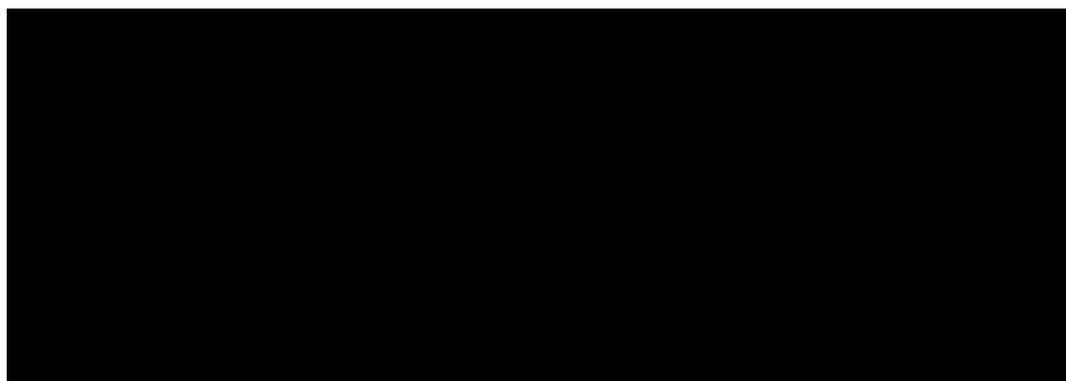
By **Kassie Simmons**

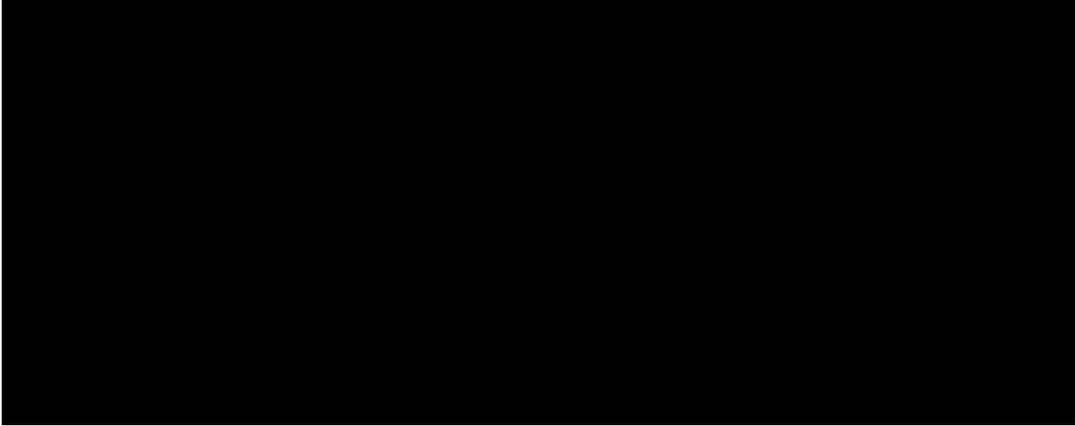
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Carlie Massie has participated in quarter horse shows since she was 8 years old.

In October, as the West Point High School graduate and Virginia Quarter Horse Association Queen, Massie will compete for the national title at the All American Quarter Horse Congress.





Showing horses involves several key areas: training horses to walk a certain way, guiding them through patterns and showing off your riding ability while maintaining a clean-cut appearance.

“I’m doing my Queen Contest in memory of my grandfather,” Massie said.

Massie’s grandfather Elwood Edwards died last Christmas morning due to complications from diabetes. He left his horse, Dot, to Massie, who she now shows after retiring her own horse, Oscar.

Shortly after her grandfather died, Massie attended the association’s banquet, where numerous people encouraged her to apply for the queen position. After sending a letter of intent, she got a call that she had been selected.

“Carlie is very passionate and has good riding ability,” said association president Mike Stoher. “To be queen, you have to be competitive, and she’s a go-getter.”

Massie was selected based partly on the records of her previous shows with Oscar and on her more recent ones with Dot. Candidates must be 18 to 25 years old, unmarried and without children. Community service is also a factor.

“You’re allowed to be (VQHA) queen for up to three years,” Massie said. “A lot of queens go through the first year as a trial year. The second year is a bit more competitive and the third year is when they go all out.

“I’m going all out to begin with.”

Massie’s duties as queen take a lot of time and dedication. Massie, 21, balances queen duties with maintaining her 3.4 GPA at Bridgewater College, where she is entering her senior year and studying business.

As queen, she is expected to help regional associations, 4-H Clubs, open shows, clinics, color-breed associations, cattle associations, promote memberships with VQHA and the national association, assist at horse shows and hold discussions to promote future queen candidate participation. She also serves as a member of the VQHA Board.

Massie will compete nationally at Congress, where she will be judged based on three sessions: horsemanship, an interview and a written test. Congress is hosted by the Ohio Quarter Horse Association.

Unfortunately, Dot will be unable to show at Congress. Due to medical problems, he hasn't been shown enough to be prepared for the contest. Instead, Massie will lease a horse trained by her coaches Matt and Beth Gouthro for the contest.

"Learning to work with a horse will be an obstacle, but he's a good horse and I know she'll do well with him," said Beth Gouthro.

Massie hopes that next year things will be different and she can take her grandfather's horse.

"I'm very optimistic about Carlie," Stohr said. "Many queens don't go (to Congress) their first year, but I think she can win it all because she's smart and hungry."

If she wins, she will be crowned Congress Queen and become the First Lady of the Congress for the following year. As First Lady, Massie would serve on the All-American Quarter Horse Congress Board. The Congress Queen is also required to represent the national and Ohio associations and Congress at various horse shows and events throughout the following year.

"I hope we win. I know she'll study hard — she's brilliant — and she's good with people, so she'll nail the interviews," Gouthro said.

It's unclear whether Massie will run for queen next year, but she isn't opposed to the idea. Stohr said he would encourage her to run again and should she decide to do so, it may be a more competitive contest.

"I'm currently working with (the VQHA board) on getting some kind of show set up to help decide who gets to be queen next year," Massie said.

Stohr confirmed the Virginia association is in the process of amending the application process for queen. Next year, applicants may have to compete for the crown in a show in front of the board. During the show, candidates will be judged on their horsemanship and interview questions.

Massie's advice for anyone chasing a big dream is to have patience. As a production-oriented person who likes to see results, she said it was a hard lesson for her to learn.

"She's doing more than previous queens," Stohr said. "It's part of her personality. She's more visible."

Massie is using her position to spread diabetes awareness and guide children with an interest in showing horses. At each event she attends, Massie sets up a booth that includes information about her, the Queen Contest and diabetes awareness.

“That’s where the money (my sponsors have donated) is going for now,” Massie said. “At the end of the year, any and all leftover funds will be donated in memory of my grandfather from the VQHA Queen.”

This summer, she attended a number of 4-H camps in the state to tell children what she wishes she had known at their age, including tips and tricks about showmanship, horsemanship and the quarter horse industry. Stoher said the effort she puts into her queen duties is one of the many things that makes her stand out in a crowd.

“My main focus is the kids and diabetes awareness,” Massie said “I want to make my granddaddy proud.”

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