

Which Horse Professionals Are Important?

Elisabeth McMillan

"You have to make a decision in life, either all of us are important or none of us are. I choose to believe that all of us are important."

So what does this statement have to do with you?

As horse professionals, we have choices. We can choose to only serve those whom we think can benefit our businesses and careers or we can choose to be ambassadors of our profession and strive to make every contact we have with the public (and each other) honor our profession.

We are all important. Our individual behavior and words reflect on the integrity of our profession as a whole. Our conduct shapes opinions about "horse people" and influences whether other people are attracted to the equestrian community or repelled by it.

Today, I ask myself, "What can I do to better honor my profession?" Too many horse professionals tout themselves as being one of the few honest/good people in a stereotypically dishonest profession. It is one thing for those outside the profession to disparage it. However, it's quite another thing altogether when that disparagement comes from the inside. It is far more harmful.

Nevertheless, I believe many of us have been guilty of this, to some degree or another, without thinking of the harm it causes. Regardless of riding discipline, breed, talent, success or failure, we are all part of the same profession, a word against one of us is a word against all of us.

It is easy to share horse business horror stories and be telling the absolute truth. But I believe we have to look at our motives. If we are sharing these stories for shock value or to make ourselves look better, then I think we should leave most of these stories untold. On the other hand, I don't think we should ignore the problems. **A good rule to live by is to only share problems with the people who can actually help you to solve them. It is the most practical and positive way to effect a change.**

It is not an easy choice to live by. The minute you are sitting with your customers and see another horse professional engaging in a training method you disagree with, or meet potential customers who are considering a riding discipline other than your own, you may find yourself sorely tempted to abandon your code.

Just remember, **in many cases, it is a single contact with one horse professional that influences how a person views the entire industry.** If we are to be true ambassadors for our horses and profession, **our goal should be to build respect for our profession.** This means doing our individual best but also, I think, it involves changing how we view and represent each other. What prejudices or opinions do we need to let go of? What common ground can we find? What issues do we need to unite on? How can we do a better job of seeking out what is good and honorable about each other and be proud to share it?

This article in its entirety is on the website www.equestrianprofessional.com

Compliments of Gary Millar
Strathcona Equine Networking Group (SENG)
Tel. 780-499-9219
Email: info@discoverhorses.org