

# Growing The Sport Of Show Jumping In Central Virginia

*For 30 Years, The CVSJA Has Promoted Jumper Competition In The Heart Of The Commonwealth*

**By Gail Thompson**



**CVSJA Founder, Gail Thompson and current Co-President Kimberly Anderson.**

The Central Virginia Show Jumping Association (CVSJA), committed to promoting the sport of Show Jumping, holds an annual series of shows that has been consistently voted as one of the VHSA's top ten shows for the past 26 years. Since 2002 the venue has been the beautiful Deep Run Show Grounds with its good footing and lovely old covered grandstand.

When trainer Gail Thompson and her children returned to Virginia in 1989, she and her daughter Sulu Rose were disappointed at the dearth of local Jumper shows in the area. They had been showing at both local and "A" rated shows in Georgia but it seemed the only option for jumpers in the Richmond area was the big A show in Culpeper. There were many local horse shows catering to the hunters but no place to get experience in the jumper world.

Gail's client base grew and by 1993 she persuaded the parents of some of her students to help fund a local series of jumper shows where riders and horses could prepare themselves for the Recognized AHSA shows.

Gail, Tony Yankowski, John Tate, and Paul Rugh each put up \$1,000 to buy a set of jumps, a trailer to store them on, ribbons, and money to rent the Western Riders show grounds. They planned a series of 10 shows for that first experimental season. Volunteers were commandeered and willingly offered to handle the many jobs that need to be done in order to operate a one-day show.

As Kelly Kent was setting the course she had designed for the first show, the four founders were holding their breath in hopes of good attendance -- the income from the show would be needed in order to continue the series. Their worries quickly switched tracks when they saw how many trailers began to pull into the small parking area. Now they were afraid there wouldn't be enough room because a section of the lot had been cordoned off for a warm-up ring!

By the end of the day, the three divisions -- "C Jumpers" (2'9" - 3'), "B Jumpers" (3'-3'6") and "A Jumpers" (3'6"-4') had brought in a total of thirty horses and over 70 rounds for the six classes. It was an exciting start.

As seasons progressed, a second ring was added for smaller divisions to encourage novice riders and horses to compete. Prize money was given to the top three finishers in each division and the season's final show became a Mini Prix with a \$500 prize per division. A year-end awards banquet was held.

Over the years, the jumps have become equal to any found at USEF recognized shows, the courses designed are of excellent quality, and the attendance has grown to upwards of 100 horses per show.

In 2018 after 25 years at the helm, Board Chairman Gail Thompson turned over management of the shows to Co-Presidents Kimberly Anderson and Sulu Rose-Reed. Kim and Sulu have revitalized the organization and brought it into the world of technology with online entries, social media communication, and many more improvements.

A scholarship that had been established in memory of Rebecca Lipscombe (a young rider who trained with Gail and Sulu and unfortunately died of a heart condition at the young age of 14) was moved from Swift Creek School of Equitation to CVSJA by Gail and Rebecca's mother Polly in 2018. Blake Vidnuas, a Pony Clubber, who has been successfully competing and assisting at CVSJA shows for the past few years was the first recipient of the \$5,000 grant, which was awarded at the year-end dinner held at Dover Hall over Thanksgiving weekend. The money is to be used to further her education and riding goals.

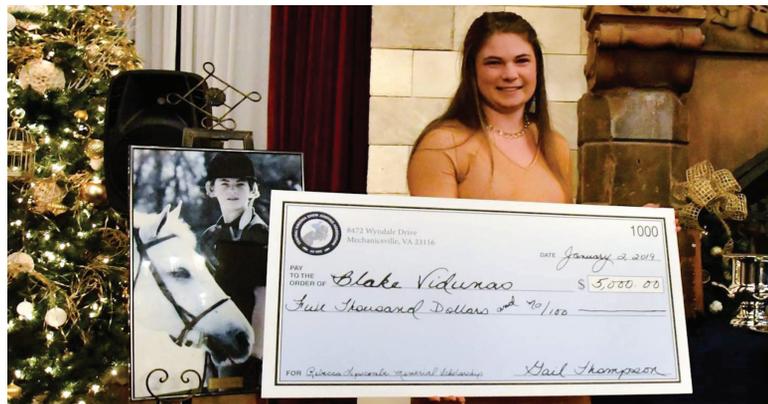
CVSJA sponsors Spring and Fall clinics to continue the education of show jumpers. This year's Spring clinic, given by Sandra Ruiz, was well-attended, despite the rain, on the Saturday before the first show in April. Check CVSJA Shows.com for the Fall Clinic announcement. Another innovation is an Equitation Prep Class for junior riders that is held as the final class in Ring 1 at each show.

At the commencement of each division there is a 15-minute ticketed warmup which can be used to familiarize inexperienced horses with the venue. This has proven to be very popular with the competitors. Costume Pairs and Top Score classes have been added to the schedule of some of the show dates.

CVSJA provides a friendly and supportive place for exhibitors, regardless of experience. The organization welcomes new-comers to the excitement of show jumping along with experienced amateurs and professionals hoping to hone their skills for the A shows. For many competitors CVSJA is their "scene of action" and the year-end awards is their goal of preference.

Spectators are always welcome to come and watch young novice riders up to top professional Grand Prix riders. There are vendor/craftsman and food concessions in the new market area, and it is hoped that local residents will come to shop, eat and enjoy the show jumping.

CVSJA is thankful for the support of our equestrian community, sponsors, advertisers, and the many volunteers who give graciously of their valuable time to advance the sport of show jumping in the region.



**Blake Vidnuas, a Pony Clubber who competes and assists at CVSJA shows, receives a \$5,000 scholarship given in memory of Rebecca Lipscombe.**