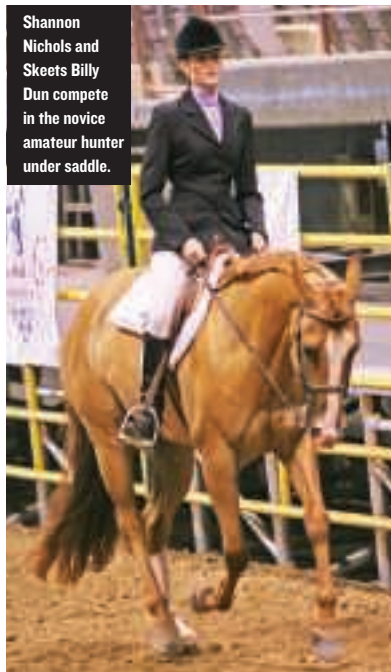


Whole New Experience

Shannon Nichols and Skeets Billy Dun compete in the novice amateur hunter under saddle.



Idaho rider tries out AQHA at Region One Experience.

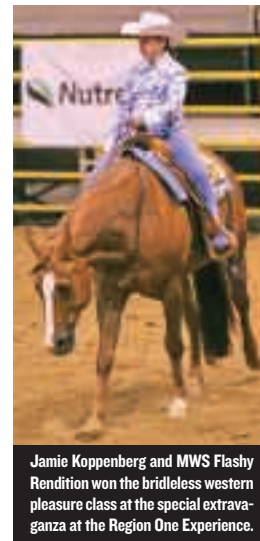
**Story and photos by
Tonya Ratliff-Garrison**



With the sun rising, Rachel Nordby of Bend, Oregon, and Docs Royal Doulton wait for their turn in the youth aged geldings class.



Christina Allen and Paloma Roo circle their cow in the amateur working cow horse.



Jamie Koppenberg and MWS Flashy Rendition won the bridless western pleasure class at the special extravaganza at the Region One Experience.

LAST YEAR AT THE REGION ONE EXPERIENCE, Shannon Nichols sat in the stands. This year, she sat on a horse.

Shortly before the 2008 Region One Experience, the Boise, Idaho, resident had purchased Skeets Billy Dun, a red dun gelding with no show experience. Shannon had been showing on the Paint and Pinto show circuits but decided she wanted to move to showing AQHA.

"I'd been showing most on the other circuits for about four years, and they were just so competitive on such a level that for those of us who are novice amateurs, it was very intimidating and not very welcoming," she said. "I show for fun. That's what it's all about for me. When I stop having fun, I just don't do it anymore. That's a lot of the reason why I left the Paint circuit, got rid of my Paint and picked up a Quarter Horse."

The Region One Experience on, July 22-26 in Nampa, Idaho, was the first AQHA show for Shannon. After watching much of the show in 2008, Shannon decided she wanted to bring her gelding to try him out at the 2009 Regional Experience.

"I've been training for this show for seven months straight and just working on and understanding more of what AQHA judges look for," she said. "This has been the big push this year, and I cut way back on my showing at local shows to be able to afford to come here."

Shannon and Skeets Billy Dun competed in the western pleasure, hunter under saddle, horsemanship and hunt seat equitation. It was the first time the 5-year-old gelding had been in the large arena at the Idaho Center, and although the pair didn't place high in the classes, Shannon was pleased



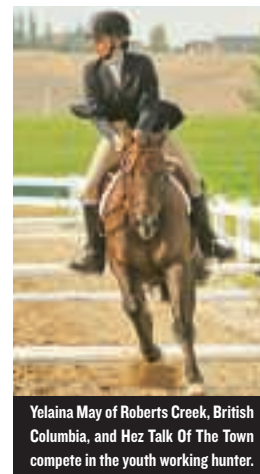
Rhema Manning enjoys some of the apple pie handed out during the Washington State Quarter Horse Association-sponsored social.

with the show and her horse.

"For this being my first AQHA show and his first AQHA show, I'm happy with how we did," she said. "He was a little bit nervous since it was his first time in the facility, but I think it went well."

"But what I really came here for was to have a good time, meet new people and see how competitive we can be. We didn't do a lot of classes. Just enough to get his feet wet and see how he does. And it was to get my feet wet, too. I'm enjoying it, and it has been really fun."

And that's exactly the experience Shannon was hoping for. ☺



Yelaina May of Roberts Creek, British Columbia, and Hez Talk Of The Town compete in the youth working hunter.

Tonya Ratliff-Garrison is field editor for The American Quarter Horse Journal. To comment, write to tonyag@aqha.org.

ALL-AROUND WINNERS

Markel Insurance sponsored Tex Tan show saddles for these awards:

- **Novice Youth** – Jamie Koppenberg of Monroe, Washington, and MWS Flashy Rendition
- **Youth** – Paxton Deal of Caldwell, Idaho, and Cant Pass The Black
- **Novice Amateur** – Lynda Gress of Bend, Oregon, and Mister Youre A Doll
- **Amateur** – Michelle Yonkovich of Meridian, Idaho, and Impulsively Good