

Meet your 2025 KWAH Points Recorder / 1 Year Board Member Kevin Solofra

Moving from Decatur, Illinois to McPherson, Kansas about 6 years ago, Kevin Solofra and his family were looking for fun family-oriented activities with horses that were affordable so his daughter Piper could continue with her love of riding. They found a local saddle club Bit & Spur out of Bentley that was part of KWAH, and everything just fell into place.

Kevin states that when they were looking for a club for horse activities the most important part was that they were family oriented and focused on the youth aspect by encouraging, teaching, and making sure that their kids were engaged. He says that Bit and Spur fits this perfectly. They were welcoming and encouraging for both he and his daughter and that he sees his daughter as well as himself developing lifelong friendships with other members of the club, that have become like family.

Although Kevin currently isn't riding he still makes sure that his daughter gets to attend as many shows as possible. Scheduling sometimes gets in the way with all of the other activities his family is part of, but they do their best to make shows local to his area. Even though he isn't riding he is a big part of the Bit & Spur Saddle Club and helps out at the locally hosted shows.



Pole Bending is such an interesting event, one that requires the skill to communicate with your horse and make it a dance really. Kevin said this was his favorite event to ride when he first started because it helped him learn to communicate better with his horse and improve his riding ability. Not only does he enjoy riding this event, but it is also his favorite event to watch, he says. Seeing the bond of the horse and rider, watching it grow as each kid works hard to communicate with their horse seamlessly. You see those riders that really work hard at it and then there are those that have mastered it and move effortlessly through those poles dancing in rhythm with their horse. This is what I most enjoy seeing the development of skills between each kid and their horse, he stated.



Recently Kevin got a new horse and is excited to begin riding again. He says he has a lot to relearn but that is what is so great about KWAH is that they are so supportive even when someone is walking and just learning. He says it will be a big step to get back in the saddle, then in the ring, but it will happen. Until then Kevin continues to watch his daughter and support her in her dreams as she continues to ride and develop her skills along with her horses, which he hopes will continue so that she can improve without the \$30 thousand dollar horse she keeps asking for.

Running for the 2024 KWAH Board of Directors was an easy decision Kevin states, because he liked the idea of supporting the association. This association supports its riders most importantly youth riders, and they focus on family and building friendships. I wanted to foster those same values and ideas with my family and what better way to do that is by serving on the board of directors. As an engineer, I am a very number-oriented person, so I hope to be able to use these skills from my job to assist me in the Points Recorder position. I am looking forward to this new challenge.

Kevin said one of the hardest things about being on the board of directors is just how spread out the members of the board are. I prefer to communicate face to face, which we do, but much of our communication is electronically and sometimes you just lose the connection and the meaning of what is being said. Personalities can become tense but knowing that the board members are all there for the same reason, they always work themselves out.

On the flip side of this is how many wonderful people I have gotten to meet by serving on the Board of Directors. Members that I just would say Hi to in passing now carry on a conversation. I have had the chance to meet so many more members of the association and now know more about each of them, states Kevin.

As for goals as a Board Member, Kevin believes he has the same goals as each of the Board Members, to help however possible, make it fun and easy for all members, and to inspire others to want to help and serve the association in some manner. Everyone should feel welcome and heard, and it is a goal to make members feel that way says Kevin.

Serving on committees has been fairly easy, the rules committee was fun but took a lot of work and understanding, and it also makes you learn the rule book states Kevin. He says his best qualities for helping with a committee is time and honest effort. This is the way that I can stay involved and help without riding a horse states Kevin. Serving on a committee is a great way to learn about the association, but if you have an interest in serving on the Board of Directors, "Just Do It". Everyone's experiences are different he states, but with honest effort each person can have a good experience for themselves.



Kevin says that his favorite fundraising are those that are done by the youth. That with their fundraising involvement helps them learn to talk to people, to communicate what they want and helps build character and confidence. As for new fundraising ideas, he says the 50/50 raffles are always a hit especially when kids are selling the tickets and raffles for gift certificates to businesses that are used frequently, but for more than just \$20 or \$50, make them valuable to the members.



Our youth are so involved and busy finding time for them to ride and have fun is a challenge, but maybe having them give talks at local schools, describing our association would help get the interest of other kids in the school. Not to mention if we were to get more kids that wanted to work for those scholarships. To gain more members we need to be more proactive by advertising. Get the word out on additional websites, social media, feed stores, and communities. Maybe get community buy-in and involvement somehow. When I first became a member our family was welcomed in a huge way, Kevin says. We need to make sure that new members feel welcomed to the association, so they continue to spread the word.

Kevin states that when he talks about KWHHA he describes it as a fun way for families to enjoy riding in a family friendly environment for all skill levels. There are some top riders out there that are amazing, but those are the ones that you aspire to ride like. It is an association where you can hang out with your friends, do horse-related activities, and you get to learn so many things about other horse-minded people that you may not have ever known. KWHHA is the definition of a fun, family and friends' association while on horseback or on the sidelines, you are always welcome.

Until Next Time,
Renee Nichols
KWHHA Historian