

MR. VALENTINE AND EHRIN RITTMUELLER WIN HUNTER-JUMPER ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN'S \$5000 USHJA NATIONAL HUNTER CLASSIC OUT OF 40 ENTRIES

May 22, 2011 – Grass Lake, MI: For Ehrin Rittmueller, today's win in the inaugural Hunter-Jumper Association of Michigan's \$5000 USHJA National Hunter Classic aboard Diane Sheet's Mr. Valentine was especially important and significant as not too long ago the future for the 10 yr old grey Zangersheide gelding was at best, very uncertain. "At one point in time this horse came close to being euthanized for his dangerous and uncontrollable temper, so to be in the winner's circle with him is beyond anything we could possibly have wished or asked for – I think we're still in shock," stated Rittmueller. Mr. Valentine and Rittmueller bested a starting field of 40 receiving an overall score of 180 for their two jumping rounds. Taking home second place was News to Me and Meg Howard-Fuleky; placing third was Elliot and Henry Pfeiffer.

Mr. Valentine first showed up at her family's Four Winds Farm as a sales and rehab horse in 2007. "He was rank; not only did he try to bite you he also tried to bite all of the other horses around him. We could barely get a bridle on him. He was not a happy horse," remarked Rittmueller's mom, Chris Breautigam. "But after a year of turnout, being loved on by his owner, who is also riding and showing him; teaching him tricks, and letting him just be....he's turned a corner. We also treated a few areas in his neck which seems to have given him a lot of relief. He's wearing his ears forward now, and that's nice to see." Four Winds Farm is located in Bridgeport, MI and is part of the Four Winds Equine Hospital which features a full service outpatient surgical center at their state of the art facility.

About the actual hunter classic course today, designed by Robbie McGregor, Rittmueller commented that her first round "had a lot of flow and was very soft". Judges Spencer Chapin and Beth Neilson gave Mr. Valentine a score of 89 plus the pair was rewarded three extra bonus points for the three option jumps they successfully completed. The second round, which included a log trot jump, a long-run hand gallop, a bending line, and a roll-back to a natural-type jump gave all the second round horse and riders plenty of opportunities to show off their handiness, style, and ability. Commented Chapin, "I thought the courses were well done and well suited for the caliber of horses and riders showing this week. It was a fun class to judge."

Placing second was Meg Howard-Fuleky with Lissa Guyton's News to Me, who's smooth and consistent rounds earned them scores of 89 and 86, for an overall total of 175. "I really liked both tracks. They gave my horse the ability to show off yet still be smooth and show good form." News to Me has been a consistent performer in the Green Conformation Division and is now successfully competing in the 3'3" Performance Hunters. Stated owner, Guyton, "I love showing here – the staff do a great job of making the three-week circuit feel special – they are well-run and for someone who grew up as a kid showing at these shows, I can't be more thrilled to have a horse place so well in such a fun class."

As the first round leader with a score of 93, placing third in the classic wasn't exactly what Henry Pfeiffer had intended for his ride, Elliot, owned by Patricia Haines; however a close distance to the last jump in the handy round gave the pair a 74 for a two round total of 167. "My second trip was pretty much flawless up to that point – I guess I just forgot to count," chuckled Pfeiffer.

All three riders plan to continue showing in the USHJA National Hunter Classics this summer, including the events being held at Horse Shows by the Bay, Country Heir, and Waterloo Hunt.

The Hunter-Jumper Association of Michigan is organized for the purpose of stimulating the sport of riding and showing in the Hunter and Jumper Divisions; to service, promote, and protect the interests of the Association and the exhibitors; to insure uniform and consistent standards for all Association shows; to encourage the development of exhibitors of all ages by making objective and fair rules for governing competition and to insure impartial and competent judging for all shows; and, to service and promote the best interest of the USEF under which all competitions shall be held.

For a complete list of results, including Spring Circuit awards, please visit www.horseshowing.com and www.hjam.net. Photos can be found at www.hadsallphotos.instaproofs.com.