

The Kentucky Association of Fairs and Horse Shows convened its 78th Annual Convention at the historic Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky, January 8-10. Attendance rebounded strongly this year after several recent conventions were impacted by winter weather. Favorable conditions allowed members and guests to travel without disruption, contributing to a well-attended and successful event.

The Galt House, which offers approximately 1,300 guest rooms, operates at full capacity during this time due to the convention and the Kentucky County Fairs Beauty Pageants. The hotel is part of A.J. Schneider Enterprises, which also owns the Crowne Plaza located across from the Kentucky Expo Center and Kentucky State Fairgrounds on Phillips Lane near Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport, formerly Standiford Field.

The convention officially began Thursday evening with the President's Reception, hosted by the Kentucky State Fair Board. Numerous current board members were in attendance. The evening featured a buffet dinner along with both silent and live auctions showcasing more than 100 items. Proceeds from the event benefit a

scholarship fund established in memory of the late Charles Kachler, with this year's reception raising more than \$23,000. Friday afternoon featured the Horse Show Forum, during which dates for many events on the 2026 show season calendar were announced. Horse Show Chair Miranda Chaplin presided over the forum, providing guidance and updates to exhibitors and

organizers. The Horse Show Dinner and Awards Banquet followed Friday evening and drew strong attendance. The evening began with a cocktail hour, followed by dinner, door prizes, a silent auction, and the formal awards presentation.

Among the honors presented was the William Munford Jr. Overall High Point Award, sponsored by

remarks reflecting on Mr. Munford's legacy before presenting the award to Donna and Don Nabors, owners of the outstanding black Fine Harness horse, Holy Smokes, who earned major victories throughout the season, including wins at the World's Championship Horse Show, Lexington Junior League, and the American Royal. Notably, this marked the first time a Fine Harness horse has received the prestigious award. Cupp also emphasized what Munford always said about the vital role county fair horse shows play as feeder events for the World's Championship Horse Show at the Kentucky State Fair, especially through the county fair classes.

The annual business meeting was held Saturday morning, during which outgoing President Marty Fulkerson formally transitioned leadership responsibilities to incoming President Darrin Benton of Muhlenberg County. The convention concluded Saturday evening with



the Miss Kentucky County Fair Pageant, where Caitlyn Hooks of McCracken County was crowned Miss Kentucky County Fair. Shaylee Leonard of Edmonson County was named first runner-up. Hooks will represent the Kentucky Association of Fairs and Horse Shows throughout the year at numerous events, including the Kentucky State Fair and the World's Championship Horse Show in August. The Ms. and Mrs. Kentucky County Fair Pageants were held Friday, with Sarah Burton earning the Ms. Kentucky



Corrine Fetter and Ian Cox, representing Kentucky Venues, each spoke of the Kentucky State Fair at the convention.



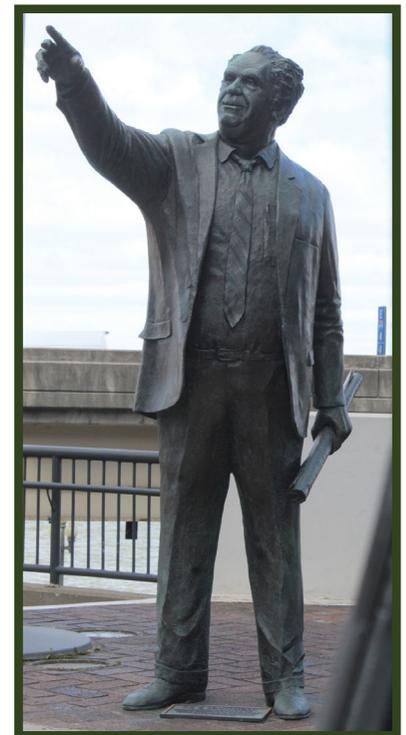
County Fair title and Jessica Kaiser crowned Mrs. Kentucky County Fair.

The Kentucky Association of Fairs and Horse Shows will return to the Galt House for its next convention January 14-16, 2027. Contracts have been secured through 2028, ensuring continued partnership with the Louisville landmark.

High point results can be found on our website: www.bluegrasshorseman.com



Darrin Benton of Muhlenberg County is the incoming president of the KAFHS, with the gavel being passed to him at the business meeting.



A statue of Al Schneider, builder of the Galt House, stands on display. Schneider also built the old Executive Inn and the Executive West, now the Crowne Plaza.



Mike and Marg Denham of Maysville attended the horse show banquet.



Brandi and David Burcham attended the horse show banquet on Friday evening. David is the manager of the Boone County Fair Horse Show.



Connie Smith, Linda Stewart, Kathleen Flower and Travis Smith enjoyed the horse show banquet on Friday evening.

The Bluegrass Horseman. The award commemorates the late William Munford Jr., a lifelong advocate for the American Saddlebred, longtime supporter of the Kentucky Association of Fairs and Horse Shows, and former manager of the World's Championship Horse Show. Keith Cupp, publisher of The Bluegrass Horseman, shared