

# Young breeders helping the future of Canadian Warmbloods

BY KAILEY PARKIN AND MARIA ARDITO / IYB-CWHBA

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARIA ARDITO; ES LEGACY PHOTOGRAPHY

*Founded in 2003, the Canadian Warmblood Horse Breeders' Association young breeders' team was the first non-European organization to participate in the International Young Breeders World Championship.*

The CWHBA Young Breeders Program encourages youth to connect and explore the sport horse breeding industry, while providing guidance and support to ensure they are prepared to have a positive impact on the equine community as a whole. The main activities of the program include but are not limited to: training and information sessions; volunteering at CWHBA inspections and events across the country; national and provincial competitions; and participation in the International Young Breeders WBFSH World Championships.

Maria Ardito, owner of Blue Spruce Equine Services, a Young Breeders Program graduate, and vice president of the CWHBA Ontario Chapter, has been instrumental in moving the program forward in Canada. Maria was a member of the CWHBA senior teams in 2017 and 2019 and then became the head coach for the team in 2022. She continues to work with CWHBA to grow the program and introduce young equestrians to the breeding industry.

## *Maria Ardito*

Maria: "I have been involved with horses my whole life even though my parents were never involved in the industry. They took me to riding lessons as a small child and the rest was history. I began coaching and training at a young age with the help and guidance of some incredible equestrians

near Caledon, Ontario where I grew up. I was very fortunate to have the best of the best in North America right in my backyard, so I was able to learn a lot at a young age. Then I was able to earn my Bachelors degree at one of the best Agricultural/Equine schools in North America. The University of Guelph was instrumental in growing my knowledge of equine reproduction, nutrition and physiology and was also how I learned about the Canadian Warmblood Young Breeders Program.

"I began volunteering at Canadian Warmblood events in 2015, and when the World Championships came to Canada in 2017 I was chosen to represent CWHBA on the Young Breeders senior team. A big thank you to Cassandra Morrish for putting on one of the best IYB World Championships and helping out with the Canadian Warmblood team. Being able to compete at Spruce Meadows was a dream come true, even if it wasn't on the back of a horse this time. After my first real taste of Young Breeders and the World Championships, I was hooked, and wanted to spread awareness of the program and continue to be an advocate for Canadian Warmbloods.

"I again was fortunate enough to compete for Canadian Warmblood at the 2019 IYB WBFSH World Championships in Austria. Along with the breeding knowledge I gained from the Young Breeders program, it has also allowed me to make international connections that have helped my business thrive. I was able to create friendships with international competitors that are assisting me in choosing fantastic horses to import to North America for breeding and for sale. Global connections allow me to diversify my knowledge in the sport and breeding industry, and help keep me on the right track moving forward.

"I knew I always wanted a career with horses, but in Canada it is extremely expensive and my parents had no prior involvement in the sport. They were incredibly supportive even though it is a very tough industry to break in to. Through many years of riding with top hunter/jumper/equitation coaches, being a working student, going to University, and then becoming an FEI showjumping groom, I was able to put my foot in the door, so to speak. Being involved with Young Breeders was a real breakthrough in my career, being able to compete internationally, and really hone in on my passion for breeding.

"After several years, I was finally able to start my own coaching/training/breeding business, Blue Spruce Equine



*The 2022 CWHBA Junior and Senior Young Breeders' teams alongside Maria Ardito*



*Senior Team member Nakisha Molyneux competing during the 2022 IYB World Championships in the Netherlands*

Services, in 2019. Since then I've bred my first Canadian Warmblood, a colt born in 2023 with excellent bloodlines, including Kannan, Balou du Rouet, Grannus, and Beach Boy, to name a few. I have also begun to expand my showjumping career and thoroughly enjoy coaching my students and helping them achieve their goals in the hunter, jumper, and equitation rings. Many of my students are now involved with the Canadian Warmblood Young Breeders Program and I love helping them explore the sport horse breeding industry and what it has to offer."

Of course, with the logistical challenges that Canada faces, and the growing popularity of the program nationally, Maria needed to enlist the help of a solid team. Heather Cowell and Kailey Parkin were among the first to help her bring the program forward for the 2022 World Championships. Chris Gould and the entire CWHBA board of directors have been incredibly supportive of the new generation that has been inspired by the Young Breeders Program.

Established breeder and CWHBA Alberta Chapter president, Cathy Chalack of Ulterra Equestrian, has also been extremely passionate about the growth of the Young Breeders Program in Canada. She and the late Charmaine Bergman assisted Maria's transition from competitor to coach of the team. Cathy has been an outstanding mentor and was the reason Kailey and many others became involved.

By promoting the CWHBA International Young Breeders program all over the country, interest has skyrocketed in the past year. CWHBA has been able to host clinics nationwide, such as with Erin Stauffer (Legacy Performance Training in Carstairs, Alberta), another new member of the 2024 team management. And since the passing of Charmaine Bergman, senior CWHBA judge and owner of Merrington Warmbloods, Lisa Longtin, has also

been a huge promoter of the program in Saskatchewan.

Heather Cowell, CWHBA Ontario Chapter president and owner of Gardiner Equestrian Farrier Services, has been a huge supporter of the program and was also a member of the Canadian Warmblood senior team that went to England for the World Championships in 2015.

### *Heather Cowell*

Heather: "I have been involved with the CWHBA Young breeders team since 2015. I have always been involved with horses, riding and training in the hunter/jumper discipline, but breeding and the young breeders' program was totally new territory for me. After hearing about the Young Breeders' Program through Canadian Warmblood, I immediately signed up and began training and trying to learn as much as I could. I worked hard to successfully earn a spot on the senior CWHBA team and had the opportunity to attend the IYB World Championships in Hartpury, England, the summer of 2015.

"This competition was a whirlwind and allowed me to learn a vast amount from our European studbook colleagues in a short amount of time. It was extremely stiff competition but I was thrilled when I learned that I had placed in the top 25 for chute jumping judging. I went in with minimal expectations and came out with a wealth of knowledge and many new international contacts.

"In 2019, I again had the privilege to qualify for a position on the Canadian Warmblood senior team, but due to personal circumstances I was unfortunately unable to attend. The knowledge I gained from this program has continued to influence my day to day life even now, several years later. My day job as a farrier and owner of Gardiner Equestrian Farrier Services, greatly benefits from the conformation and movement education derived from the young breeders program.

"I also have a small selective breeding program where I use my experience with CWHBA to aid with my choice of pairings. Using approved stallions with my premium mares have created some fantastic amateur-friendly foals that have gone on to excellent show homes.

"Not only has the young breeders program assisted in my professional career, but it has also opened doors to continued experiences with CWHBA. I have been an Ontario CWHBA board member since 2019 and currently am the Ontario chapter president. In 2023 I was also recognized for approval as a CWHBA senior judge. I volunteer with the current young breeders' team for support with clinics, education, and fundraising. It truly is a great program and an even better stepping stone into the world of Warmbloods and breeding."



## MY WBFSH

### 30 Years of Working Together for our Horses and our Breeders

**T**his year, the *WORLD BREEDING FEDERATION FOR SPORT HORSES* turns 30, and what an exciting journey it has been. From the initial vision to create better connections between breeding and the sport and better recognition our many passionate breeders all over the world, we have grown and grown to work with our partners in the industry to support the breeding of healthy, happy and talented sports horses across the globe.

At a time where our industry find itself under scrutiny and the public spotlight, our role is more important than ever in highlighting the unique and wonderful relationship between humans and their horses that starts with our breeders' commitment, knowledge, and inspiration. Our Longines-WBFSH Breeders Awards tell the many different stories of our most successful breeders in showjumping, eventing, and dressage. While each of them is unique, they also have a common factor in telling us about their passion, patience, and skill.

The beauty of breeding is that we never stop learning and we are proud to continue working hand in hand with the scientific community in promoting healthy horses equipped to lead a long and fulfilled life.

In our webinars, seminars and workshops we bring studbooks together to create opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience and to build a global community that helps raise awareness of the importance of responsible, ethical, and sustainable breeding choices.

Over the years we had much to celebrate, as every year we meet the next generations of wonderful young horses at our FEI-WBFSH World Breeding Championships for Young Horses in dressage, showjumping, and eventing. Recently, we have added to this the concept of a team competition for the WBFSH World Champions Trophy in Showjumping, which has been met with much enthusiasm by studbooks, breeders and riders alike.

In this our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year there is much to look forward to, as we continue our journey and keep welcoming new studbooks and breeders from all over the world, and as we continue to explore new ways to support our community.

But this is also an opportunity for reflection and for you to tell us what the WBFSH means to you. Whether you are a breeder or a breeding enthusiast, amateur or professional, we would love to hear and share your story to showcase the diversity of our community across the world.

To participate, you can simply message us via our social media or email [pr@wbfs.com](mailto:pr@wbfs.com) and we will be in touch. We are excited to learn more about your story with sport horse breeding and how we can support you.

email: [pr@wbfs.com](mailto:pr@wbfs.com)



*Maria Ardito, Mikayla Brummund and Lisa Longtin*

The 2022 team had such a fantastic experience in the Netherlands that they themselves were eager to help grow the program and promote it even further.

Taylor Mundt, a 2022 junior team member said; “Being on the 2022 Canadian team for Young Breeders was a fantastic experience and gave us the chance to see what the competition was about; it also gave us the chance to prepare for the next competition. Once we came home, we were able to spread the word and find more young people who are interested in learning about what makes a quality horse.”

When asked about how the interest in the program for the 2024 team differed from the previous years, she explained; “Quite a bit. We shared a lot of posts and videos over social media. It is easier to vouch for what it is about and encourage the program once you’ve had the opportunity to attend the championships.”

Senior team member Nakisha Molyneux of Alberta was also enthused about the event, saying; “2022 was my very first year being on the team for young breeders and dealing with showing young horses in hand. Through the CW IYB program, I was able to gain social skills for networking within the equestrian community and I was also able to travel internationally for the first time, which was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. If anyone is thinking about becoming a part of the team, I wouldn’t hesitate. You get to make incredible connections and friends from all over the world, along with learning and furthering your knowledge with horses in incredible ways.”

Hailey Mitford of Ontario (senior team member) had this to say, “My experience as a CWHBA Young Breeder at the 2022 International Young Breeders’ Competition in the Netherlands was truly one like no other. The knowledge acquired as a Young Breeder has allowed me to better understand what makes a horse truly desirable, and will allow it to thrive in life – both in and out of a competition setting.

“As the Young Breeders’ competition was my first time competing internationally, it deeply resonated with me; especially the ability of all the competitors to come together after a day of tough competition and connect over what we all had in common: our passion for horses. The experience was incredible, I learned about things I was passionate about, all the while travelling in a beautiful country, seeing stunning horses, making new friends and connections, and having fun. There truly isn’t more you could ask for.”

Celeste Caskanette of Ontario (junior team member) also shared her experiences, “I learnt about Young Breeders through Maria Ardito, who is a well known coach/trainer/ breeder in my town. After competing in the Young Breeders’ International Competition last summer in the Netherlands, I feel as though my knowledge for equine conformation, movement, and the overall welfare of horses has

expanded tremendously. I enjoyed being able to gather with other young horse people from all around the world, where we can all appreciate this industry together. My advice to all young horse people thinking of joining Young Breeders is to just go for it. I understand the process of trying out and competing seems a little bit overwhelming at first, but based on my experience, I do not regret it. Study hard and ask for help from your mentors.”

According to Mikayla Brummund of Saskatchewan (junior team member); “I learned about the IYB program through my riding coach Lisa Longtin (Merrington Warmbloods). When I first heard about it, I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to further my knowledge of horses, travel the world, and meet many new people. I enjoyed meeting all the new people and learning about the different cultures. In attendance at the event, were 146 participants from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, as well as the hosts Holland. The Canadian Warmblood Young Breeders’ program has expanded my knowledge of horse conformation, studbooks, and sport horse breeding as a whole. I hope one day to be a breeder myself and this program supports my goals.”

In conclusion, congratulations are in order for the 2022 CWHBA IYB team, whose accomplishments include Hailey (Ontario) and Mikayla (Sask) scoring 100% on the Theory Test, as well as Tayler (Alberta) ranking second in conformation judging, and Mikayla (Sask) placing ninth for free jumping and loose movement judging. This team represented Canada beautifully on the international stage and are now massive supporters of growing the Young Breeders’ program in Canada.

With such strong support and mounting interest, everyone is very excited for the World Championships in Denmark. Thank you to the IYB, the WBFSH, and all of the other studbooks, for this fantastic event. ■