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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**A Bit of Luck and a Lot of Beauty**



MADISON, WI, May 6, 2011 - It was a little luck of the Irish and a lot of support from the crowd that granted the title of Blain's Farm & Fleet World's Most Beautiful Horse to registered Morgan stallion, HyLee Galaxy's Wild Irish. This one-of-a-kind equine beauty contest was held as part of the 2011 Midwest Horse Fair® in Madison, Wis. this April.

Horses from around the country were nominated by their owners for Blain's Farm & Fleet World's Most Beautiful Horse competition. Online voting took place through the Midwest Horse Fair® website and votes were tallied to determine those horses that would go on to the semi-finals. Forty-five

horses, including HyLee Galaxy's Wild Irish, owned by Doc and Jackie Sweeney of Hylee Farms in Mount Horeb, Wis., made it to the semi-final round.

“Irish is in training at Dan Lynch Farms in Cross Plains, and when Dan and Judy and Doc and I heard about the competition, we thought it would be a lot of fun,” Jackie said. “We also felt he certainly had all the beauty in the world. We thought that as long as he would be at the Horse Fair anyway, we might as well give a whirl.”

No stranger to competition, HyLee Galaxy's Wild Irish has been shown in conformation classes as a yearling and a two-year old and won many championships. He has been shown successfully on a regional and national level. He is currently active in competition and is beginning a new career as a breeding stallion siring foals. HyLee Farms supports the Morgan horse demonstration at the Midwest Horse Fair® by participating in the Morgan presentation and Irish was also a part of Stallion Avenue.

“I was extremely pleased with the presentation,” Jackie said. “I thought that the music was ‘instrumental’ in the rhythm of the performance. The maneuvers at the various gaits Dan had Irish perform were flowing, collected, and showed Irish’s athleticism and the professional training Dan has done for him. It was a performance I will always remember.”

The semi-finalists appeared at the Midwest Horse Fair® where they were judged on the parameters of beauty and graceful movement by a celebrity panel of judges, along with input from the crowd with text messaging. The top six horses with the most votes went on to the final round where they had five minutes for a freestyle performance that would “wow” the audience and the judges.

HyLee Galaxy’s Wild Irish entered the arena clipped and groomed just as if he was going to the Grand Nationals, and he was as fit as any athlete in their prime. Irish entered the arena under saddle with trainer Dan Lynch aboard. He was then unbridled and turned loose to strut his stuff for the crowd.

“Of course I was so proud of Irish, he was ‘on’ the entire gig,” Jackie said. “He gave his all and it is hard for a horse to be on top of his game for five minutes non-stop. What gave me chills was when he ran down to the far end of the arena where the huge American flag was hanging, stopped, and then turned toward the audience, threw his tail up over his back and snorted. It gave me chills, as I think it did many other people. He didn’t tire at the end of his time and then he just let one of the handlers simply walk up and catch him.”

A large crowd was there to witness this one-of-a-kind equine beauty contest, and cast their votes for the World’s Most Beautiful Horse. The electronic text message voting recorded the crowd’s choice. Jackie reported that it took Dan and Irish nearly 40 minutes to get back to the barn after his win. People wanted pictures taken of themselves with Irish, the World’s Most Beautiful Horse.

“We had many people in wheelchairs who wheeled right alongside Irish and Dan to have their picture taken,” Jackie said. “He is such a kind horse.”

When Dan first started showing Irish in the western pleasure division, Jackie’s mother, Jane Steffenhagen, gave Dan a four-leaf clover pressed and sealed. She told him whenever he rode Irish he should carry it in his shirt pocket, and Dan has. Jane, an owner and breeder of many World and Regional Champions in the Morgan horse breed, passed away in 2009.

“Mom had an incredible eye for spotting a four-leaf clover, and of course that was a popular song I believe in 1948,” Jackie explained. “She gave me one year ago that I put under my buggy seat when I am showing in a driving class. So you might say Mom is still a huge part of us with the horses.”

With the title as Blain’s Farm & Fleet World’s Most Beautiful Horse, Jackie hopes Irish will become the “rock star” of the Morgan breed and the horse world. He already has his own Facebook page and his fans can look for him at shows and gracing the grounds at the 2012 Midwest Horse Fair® Stallion Avenue.

“Doc and I and all of Irish’s fans were so charged that he won,” Jackie said. “We were all jumping up and down like we were at a hockey game when the Badgers won in the Coliseum. I was so happy for everyone who was involved in getting Irish ready for the event. I felt winning in an open competition with the judging panel and the audience texting, was better than winning a World Championship. It is an incredible feeling to be acknowledged by such a large group of people and competing in such tough competition.”

The Midwest Horse Fair<sup>®</sup> is owned by the Wisconsin State Horse Council, Inc. All proceeds from the Fair are returned to the WSHC and are used to represent and foster a unified equine industry in Wisconsin, promote the equine through leadership, education, service and communication, and to take a proactive role in the future growth and development of the equine industry.

For additional information, visit [www.midwesthorsefair.com](http://www.midwesthorsefair.com) or contact the Midwest Horse Fair<sup>®</sup> by phone at (920) 623-5515 or e-mail [press@midwesthorsefair.com](mailto:press@midwesthorsefair.com).

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**Media Notes:**

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