

# Windy City Equestrians

## FILL THE SAILS OF LOCALS IN NEED

By Emily Riden



Through the efforts of Chicago Equestrians for a Cause, the Chicago Hunter Derby attracts the equestrian and local communities alike to raise money for the USHJA Foundation, the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and the University of Chicago Cancer Research Foundation.  
Photo by Marcin Cymmer

**L**ynn Jayne and Caroline “Carl” Weeden are perhaps best known for their accomplishments in the saddle as skilled riders and trainers – but the achievements and the positive impact of the duo doesn’t stop outside of the arena.

For nearly 10 years, the two Chicago-based equestrians have turned their passion and careers as professional riders and trainers into a way to give back to the equestrian and local communities through their own “Chicago Equestrians for a Cause.”

Lynn explained, “Interestingly, M.K. Pritzker had asked Carl and I to put a derby on in conjunction with her charity event, the Evergreen Invitational, which is a Grand Prix. This is when hunter derbies were still fairly new.

“That got Carl and I saying, ‘Wouldn’t this be great. We’ll get all the barns together to get behind this event, and it’ll be a charity event, so it will all be for a great cause.’ We got to talking about it, and we came up with a new idea.”

That idea was the birth of Chicago Equestrians for a Cause, the organization now dedicated to showcasing high-level equestrian sport while raising funds for selected charities.

**Lynn Jayne and Caroline “Carl” Weeden founded “Chicago Equestrians for a Cause” — an organization dedicated to showcasing high-level equestrian sport while raising funds for selected charities.**

### Giving Back Through Horses

Chicago Equestrians for a Cause hosted the first Chicago Hunter Derby at M.K. Pritzker’s farm for the benefit of the United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA) Foundation and the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital

of Chicago.

The USHJA Foundation provides charitable financial and educational assistance to members of the hunter/jumper equestrian community, and the 501(c)(3) was a natural first charitable beneficiary for Chicago Equestrians for a Cause.

“The USHJA Foundation is something that was really close to our hearts when it came to choosing the charities,” Carl said. “Lynn was president of the foundation for many years, and we both currently serve on the board of directors and know well the work that the foundation does, so it was an easy choice.”

The Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago similarly became the ideal fit for the support of Chicago Equestrians for a Cause.

A lifelong Chicago-area resident and native, Lynn herself was born at Northwestern Hospital, the academic partner of the Children’s Hospital and the campus on which the hospital is located. For Carl, whose youngest daughter is autistic, the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago is a frequent destination for testing and care.

“Going to the doctor and doing tests can be stressful enough, but when you have a kid with



**Carl Weeden and Poetry in the USHJA National Hunter Derby. The 2015 Chicago Hunter Derby took place at Carl and Rush Weeden's Annali-Brookwood Farm. Photo by Aullmyn Photography**

special needs, it's really amplified," Carl said. "Going to the Children's Hospital just makes it so much easier. They're really used to dealing with all kids and special-needs kids as well."

Carl continued, "We've also always heard such wonderful stories from other people about the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago so it really made sense for us to support them."

Following the success of the inaugural Chicago Hunter Derby, the event moved the next year to its current home at Carl and Rush Weeden's Annali-Brookwood Farm in Antioch, Illinois. Not long after, a third charitable beneficiary, the University of Chicago Cancer Research Foundation, was added.

As it concludes its ninth year, the Chicago Hunter Derby, now presented by Canadian Pacific (CP), and the year-round tireless efforts of Carl and Lynn through Chicago Equestrians for a Cause have raised more than \$500,000 for the selected charities, but Carl and Lynn are not slowing down.

"It's something that Lynn, Rush, myself, the Kentucky crew with [course designer] Bobby Murphy, our host committee chair and our



Chicago Equestrians for a Cause committee and volunteers all really, really put our hearts and souls into," Carl said. "It's very dear to all of us. It's really been a fun ride. Every year we really try to tweak it and see if we can improve it.

"It's a lot of work, but it's a lot of fun to sit back after it gets done. We usually sit down with whatever our signature drink was that year, put our feet up, and look like we're going to fall over from exhaustion, but do a little toast to the event and the organization," Carl said.

"It's so satisfying to be giving back to the charities," Lynn added. "We're not doing this for any of our own means; we're really doing it to put on a great charity event and be able to show our success in that manner."

## Connecting The Community

And while giving back to the community financially is the primary goal of the efforts of Chicago Equestrians for a Cause, the Chicago Hunter Derby, presented by CP, also creates

**Carl Weeden and Lynn Jayne. Photo by Aullmyn Photography**

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the opportunity to bring the equestrian and Chicago communities together for an event unlike anything many spectators have ever attended.

"We're so unique with the horses on the field, they're not going to see anything else like that in Chicago," Carl said. "The elegance of the field, the true competition and the athleticism and beauty of the horse is something that they're not going to see unless they come to the Chicago Hunter Derby. It's comparable almost to going to the Kentucky Derby. The horses are just so beautiful to watch. For somebody that doesn't know a lot [about the sport], the way we do our Sunday, it's very fast paced and the horses are galloping on the field. It really makes it exciting."

The decision was made early on to run the first round of the USHJA International Hunter Derby on Saturday along with the USHJA National Hunter Derby, and then have the final handy round on Sunday, which makes for a spectator-friendly and exciting event for the crowds and general public that come to watch.

"We've really done our homework in this aspect," Lynn said. "It's an exciting way to learn about hunters."

As the crowd attendance, exhibitor participation and funds raised for the benefitting



Lynn Jayne, right, and Marion Maybank present Kelley Farmer and Mindful as the winners of the 2015 \$50,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby.  
Photo by Aullmyn Photography

charities continue to grow, Lynn and Carl are quick to recognize all of those who make the Chicago Hunter Derby possible and help make their goals and dreams for Chicago Equestrians for a Cause come to fruition.

"The support of our sponsors that return year after year has been incredible," Carl said. "We've also had great community support. There's been an outpouring of support of people in Chicago

– both from the local and the horse community. We can't say thank you enough to the sponsors, the community and the spectators that come and watch us year after year. We couldn't do it without them."

To learn more about Chicago Equestrians for a Cause and the Chicago Hunter Derby, visit [www.ChicagoEquestriansForACause.com](http://www.ChicagoEquestriansForACause.com). 