



May 13, 2009

Fremont girl wins national equestrian title

BY LESLIE BIXLER
Staff writer

FREMONT -- Fourteen-year-old Holly Phillips recently won a national title at the Interscholastic Equestrian Association national championships at Lake Erie College in Painesville.

Phillips won the national championship title in reining and horsemanship as an individual and as a team member of the Autumn Rose Equestrian team, which is part of the IEA. The team is based out of Columbus and is coached by Debbie Griffith, who is originally from Fremont. She and her husband, Ollie, have been coaching the Ohio State University Equestrian team for 24 years and have been coaching the Autumn Rose Equestrian high school team for several years.

Nationals were held earlier this month and 39 teams qualified to show at the event.

Phillips has eight horses, and always had them growing up. She is the daughter of Jeff and Sandy Phillips.

"I was really excited," she said of winning the title. "I had hoped so (to win it), but I didn't know if it would happen."

She has been on the team for two years.

"I try to ride everyday at home and I go down to Columbus once a week to ride with my coach," she said.

In reining, Phillips explained she rode the horse in a pattern, where the horse would perform spins and pivots. Horsemanship consisted of riding the horse while the judge asks the rider to have the horse perform a turn among other challenges.

Griffith said Phillips is a talented rider and works hard.

The equestrian program is available for children in grades 6 through 12.

"It's a neat way to show, even if they don't have their own horse," Griffith said, noting the host school for a competition has horses for the show.
