

Hi everyone! Thank you to everyone for electing me as the chapter VP and for sending me as the chapter delegate to the International meeting, I do appreciate it. While Portland, Maine in January will never be a vacation destination, it was warmer than last year's International meeting which was held in Minneapolis. While the President's Message is a recurring part of our chapter newsletter, rest assured that mine will not be 😊.

Highlights from the International meeting....

Speakers

We had 3 sessions where speakers from a group called Veterinary Orthopedic Sports Medicine Group spoke. This is a group that specializes in the prevention, diagnosis, and repair of soft tissue and bone injuries in dogs. They do extremely cutting-edge work with dogs, often consulting with leaders in human sports medicine and working with medical equipment manufacturers to create canine specific versions of human treatments. I really had two primary takeaways from their talk. *Treat your dog like a human athlete.* You would never expect a human sprinter to sit still for multiple hours then suddenly give you their maximum effort. Humans always warm up before athletics, dogs should do the same. Many of our dogs probably suffer from minor muscle injuries without us ever knowing. The same goes for cooling down after a workout. Brent and I have already discussed this, hopefully we will be able to integrate some warm-up process into our training day. My other takeaway was that many severe injuries occur when the dog is slipping, so be very careful on ice, and indoors in non-carpeted areas.

Another session was done by a research biologist from the University of Maine studying woodcock migrations. His team puts GPS transmitters on the birds to track their migrations. Unfortunately, his research was focused on the eastern seaboard migrations, so it didn't really impact us much. However, I do have a few tidbits of information you might like:

- Average bird flies 160 miles per night and they only fly at night
- When they stop to rest, they typically stay 5 days
- The average migration last 25 days and covers 870 miles
- Birds do not stick together when migrating
- 1 bird covered 630 miles in 1 night!

Pheasants Forever spoke and focused on recruitment of new hunters. Unfortunately, hunter numbers continue to drop. Pheasants Forever is very focused on working with NAVHDA regarding events to recruit hunters. Interestingly their most successful group of new hunters have been individuals focused on healthy eating and the whole field to table concept. I am planning on reaching out to a local Pheasants Forever chapter and see if they have anything we could do together.

Our last speaker was an author, Craig Koshyk, who has spent the last 12 years traveling the world to see every pointing breed still in existence in its native land. He was extremely entertaining. If you ever want to see a weird looking dog, try to find a picture of a Spanish Two Nosed Pointer. The breed was documented as being extinct, but he did find one breeder in the Pyrenees Mountains still breeding them, basically it is a breed prone to extreme cleft palates, thus actually splitting the nose so they can actually point their nostrils in different directions.

Executive Council Report

- Only 20% of NAVHDA membership voted in the last election, please vote, your opinion does matter
- 9% membership growth this year – yeah!
- Mark Whalen is replacing Chip Bondi as Director of Judging. Mark wants to:
 - Implement rule changes/clarifications faster. Changes will be published in the VHD magazine and then be enforced from that point forward. The goal is to use the VHD magazine to keep everyone, judges and handlers aware and on the same page.
 - Publish a new AIMS book. The goal is to merge the AIMS book with the Judges Handbook to create one, more comprehensive publication. Personally, I think this is a GREAT IDEA!
 - One judging point of emphasis that was discussed focused on retrieves. The AIMS book states that “The dog will sit or stand quietly close to the handler until commanded to release the duck or bird”. The expectation, which will be enforced, is that the utility dog will not be moving when the handler takes a bird from the dog.
- Dan Wittman is replacing Tim Clark as Director of Testing
 - Dan and I spent an hour talking at the airport. Dan would love to find a better way to designate judging regions than the traditional NAVHDA map. We discussed technology solutions and Dan would like to involve me in continuing this discussion.
- Traffic on NAVHDA’s Facebook account increased by 675% last year

Chapter Motions

There were two chapter motions, both of which were voted down.

- Motion – Add a 4th judge to the field portion of the Invitational. Discussion was that if you did this you really needed to have 5 judges to keep an odd number for the consensus discussions. General feeling was that the need for another judge did not merit the cost involved.
- Motion – Create a formal judge review form for chapters to complete after each test. Discussion was that there was already a process in place, any NAVHDA member can contact the Directors of Judging or Testing at any time, so there was no need for a new process.

The Heart of NAVHDA

Every once in a while, I see the true heart of NAVHDA. It showed itself twice during the conference.

- Heart Episode One – The Seabrook chapter has a 12-year-old girl with a dog qualified for the invitational. During the banquet they called her up and gave her \$100 toward her expenses. Then, unprompted, other individuals in the crowd started making donations. By the time it was done, the girl and her father were both crying, and they had raised over \$3,000 for her. Truly awesome to watch.
- Heart Episode Two – The past two years a lady ran in the invitational using a motorized, tracked “wheelchair”. This thing is basically a mini tank. Terry Wilson, the founder of Ugly Dog Hunting, is donating 3 of these devices, which cost \$12,000 each to individuals that love to hunt but cannot physically do it anymore. NAVHDA is starting a group to help Terry find and vet candidates for the donation. I know we talk about sponsors at every test, but this was extremely impressive to me, and personally I plan to try hard to make purchases via Ugly Dog.

Thank you again for the opportunities to be the chapter VP and the chapter delegate, they are appreciated it. Oh, one more thing from the International meeting....I was approved as a judge!