

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

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Draft horse show called magnet for Lansing region

More than 34,000 visitors jammed the MSU Livestock Pavilion for this year's MI Great Lakes International Draft Horse Show and Pull (MGLI) for a chance to see world class Percherons, Shires, Belgians and Clydesdales in action. While they were here Oct. 18 - 21, visitors spent \$852,546 dollars in the community for overnight accommodations, food, fuel, hardware, camping supplies, clothing and general shopping, according to the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau (GLCVB).

Although Draft Horse Journal of Waverly Iowa reports that horse show exhibitors and audiences are down 25 percent this year, MGLI reports an increase. The 34,000 visitors represents a 7 percent increase for MGLI, which also reports 327 exhibitor farms from 25 states and 3 Canadian provinces who registered 1163 draft horses to compete in the various class categories of the largest draft horse event in North America.

"We're thankful to our fans and exhibitors who continue to enjoy our programs, and we're also fortunate to be getting additional support from private and government agencies alike, including the MI Department of Agriculture." MGLI President Aaron Rice

said. "As we continue to improve our programs from year to year, we'll have a surprise or two for next year that will be really big for our fans, exhibitors and supporters."



MGLI President Aaron Rice directs the five hitch choreography from his "shotgun" seat on the Perkins family wagon, from Glenview Clydesdales in Cass City, as it rounds the newly completed traffic circle in downtown Lansing. - Photo courtesy www.MGLI.org

Rice added that exhibitors also bring family members and up to a dozen employees to assist with the 'heavies' that weigh more than a ton apiece, but those several thousand people are not counted in the 'gate'. And again this year, nearly 100 horse entries had to be turned away due to space limitations of the MSU Pavilion.

Increased activity on www.MGLI.org also speaks to the ramping popularity of this event. From the first of the year through Oct. 24, 2007, there were 384,456 hits...208,925 thousand of them in October alone.

And for the third time in recent years, MGLI also hosted the "Six-Horse Classic Hitch Series" finals - a separate international points competition for the best of the best in North America. All show results are posted at: <http://www.mgli.org/results.html>

For additional fan interest this year, MGLI offered a first-time two-horse (team) class for lady drivers. Due to low expectations of three or four entries, it was to be an 'all breed' competition. Interest was so great that MGLI planners had to separate the teams into three classes in order to efficiently handle the 32 entries: Percheron, Belgian, and Clydesdale. This competition class will continue into the future.

And for the first time ever, MGLI members took their teams' jingling thunder into an urban setting, and paraded through downtown Lansing on Oct. 17 to the delight of the noon luncheon crowd. MGLI's four hitches and MSU's 2-horse team assisted Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero and City Council members as they celebrated the opening of Michigan Avenue after months of construction and restricted traffic. Bernero rode the lead 6-horse hitch wagon from the Tamburo Family from Boston, and he later was Master of Ceremonies for the grand opening and dedication of the new traffic circle and future water fountain at Michigan and Washington Square, ringed by the draft horse teams. Bernero called the new structure "The Gateway to the State Capitol." Lansing Principle Shopping District Director Kevin Green predicted that when the fountain is finished, the grand view down Michigan Avenue to the capitol will be pictured on many travel magazines and state and local promotional publications for years to come. MGLI President Aaron Rice said: "MGLI is honored to be part of this historic Lansing and Michigan event, as we gather across town to display and preserve Michigan's unique draft horse heritage and its large part in this state's agricultural economy - the second largest economic driver in Michigan."

Source: MGLI