

# NON-PRO KNOW HOW

A driving passion and clear business goals have been the foundation for non-pro Wendy McCain's success in the Appaloosa industry

BY DANA RUSSELL  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF WENDY MCCAIN &  
LARRY WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPHY



If you ask Wendy McCain what her favorite thing about the Appaloosa breed is she will tell you that as much as she loves the uniqueness of the horses, it is the people that drew her in and have become a life-long community she is proud to be a part of. What becomes immediately apparent when you visit with her is that her enthusiasm for the breed is contagious. Today, she runs a small but incredibly successful non-pro breeding program.

Like so many of us, Wendy came from modest beginnings and was horse-crazy from birth. Raised in Minnesota, her family owned Quarter Horses and she competed in her first show at age three. Her entire family was involved in horses and they went to shows almost every weekend from May to October each year. Though she went to college and held a professional position in the marketing industry for 15 years, Wendy always managed to have horses in her life to some degree. Her breed of choice became Appaloosas in 1996 when she married an Appaloosa owner, and she never looked back.

They bred, raised and showed Appaloosas, and in 2000 they bred Tonya Star to Artful Move. The match produced the horse of Wendy's dreams she named Artfully Designed. She was there to assist in his delivery and has owned him his whole life, carefully guiding his career and building her breeding program with him.

Driven to be successful, Wendy has never stopped educating herself, setting specific goals and applying her business skills to her horse program. Never afraid to ask for help and always seeking to better her knowledge, she even went to Texas A & M to become certified in Equine Reproduction/Mare & Stallion Management.

Since 2006 she and her husband, David McCain, maintain a 140-acre ranch nestled eight minutes south of Abilene, Texas. Rockin' MD Ranch operates out of a small barn and an equipment barn that Wendy claims is nothing fancy, but very cost effective. The property is also home to deer, turkeys and





wild hogs and the McCain hospitality not only feeds the critters, but welcomes visitors at all times.

Wendy is living proof that you don't have to be a professional or have excessive amounts of money to be successful in the horse show/breeding industry. Consistently among the leading non-pros in our breed for over two decades, *AJ* wanted to know the secrets to her success. She was kind enough to sit down with us and we are pleased to bring you her story.

**AJ:** Thank you for taking the time to visit with us.

**WM:** You're welcome, I'm happy to be here.

**AJ:** TELL US ABOUT ARTFULLY DESIGNED.

**WM:** In May 2001, Artfully Designed, a.k.a. Henry, was born. I actually had to pull him from his mother. He was a huge baby, but more so, he was beautiful. When he was a long yearling, I set goals for him. I had a target, like a shooting target; in the outside of the target on the first ring was his 2-year-old year. My goal was to have him be champion or reserve at the Worlds in the HUS. He accomplished that. In the next ring of the target, the goal for him as a 3-year-old was to repeat that win. He accomplished that.





Teaching him to drive and be successful was the aim for the next ring. He accomplished this by winning reserve World Champion in pleasure driving. The closest ring to the bulls-eye goal was to get him his silver medallion or all-around English title. At the Nationals in 2006, he earned his silver medallion and won the High Point English Horse title under the guidance of Sandy Jirkovsky.

Artfully Designed was shown at 11 horse shows in his career. He is now retired and lives in a 10-acre pasture overlooking his broodmares and get.

The bulls-eye goal was to be an outstanding producing stallion. I believe that he is well on his way to accomplishing this goal.

Henry has not been out of my possession since birth. I give thanks to the professional horsemen and horsewomen that have assisted in the success of Artfully Designed: Nancy Sue Ryan, Rusty Miller, Brian Isbel, Patty Woodrick, Sandy Jirkovsky and The staff at Cleary Lake Veterinary Hospital for Reproduction Training.



**AJ:** IS HE THE ONLY STALLION IN YOUR PROGRAM?

**WM:** No, in the spring of 2007 Sandy and I joined our resources and began promoting Zip A Dee Bar, our western/all-around stallion. To date “Snuffy” has earned 250.5 points in 17 categories, four Silver Medallions, one Bronze Medallion, seven ROMs and a Club Championship. With Both Artfully Designed and Zip A Dee Bar, we have the same goal; breed quality mares with quality stallions for quality foals. It’s not quantity that goes to the show pen. Having both stallions in our breeding program offers our customers a great option for outstanding HUS, western and all-around horses.



**AJ:** WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST FOCUS FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

**WM:** Customer service. Our breeding program is small, but we offer outstanding customer service. I have been asked several times to ship same day semen with no notice and have fulfilled. We offer great multiple-mare discounts and repeat breeding discounts. We have assisted with sales of Artfully Designed foals. In business, customer service is my number one priority and this filters down to the breeding program as well. Whatever we can do to make the experience of breeding and raising a foal enjoyable is important to us.

**AJ:** WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST OBSTACLE?

**WM:** The biggest obstacle was making the decision to relocate Xtreme Design, Artfully Designed, my horse business and my residence to Texas. There was no obstacle to cross as far as meeting and merging my life with David. It was a big obstacle to coordinate and move it all at one time. Though I knew the business opportunities were endless and I made some great new friends, it was David’s moral support that got me through the move. I miss my friends and family in Minnesota, but fortunately I get to see them several times a year.

**AJ:** WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

**WM:** From a horse standpoint, I am most proud of being in the horse business 45+ years and feel that I do not have any enemies. As a non-pro I have bred, trained, showed and now have a successful breeding program with Artfully Designed and look forward to a repeat with Zip A Dee Bar when we are finished with his show career.

I am also proud of raising and/or showing horses like Designed-WithNoColor, An Awesome Twist, Art I Sweet, Artfully Designed, Zip A Dee Bar, Chocolate Diva, Bet All Your Chips, Designed Elegance, and Designed To Trot just to name a few.

I am proud of conducting business in an ethical manner. I am also very pleased that people have trust in me, as much of my business consists of repeat customers. I do my best to be friendly and helpful to everyone. I try to live by—treat people how you want to be treated.

My biggest accomplishment in the horse business is happening now with owning/managing and standing Artfully Designed.

**AJ:** WHAT IS THE SCARIEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU WITH HORSES?

**WM:** The most scared I've been with the horses happened when I had finished collecting Artfully Designed, and on the way back to his paddock he reached out and had himself a bite of a tree. The next day he went off his feed and became severely ill. At one point we thought we were going to have to put him down. I had planted some Oleanders by the barn because I thought they were pretty—I didn't know they were poisonous to horses.

After seven days in Intensive Care at Weatherford Equine Hospital and two additional weeks of around the clock care, he had a complete recovery. The vets called him the Miracle Man.

**AJ:** WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU?

**WM:** Looking into the future I hope to raise some of the best horses in the industry and get them placed into great show homes. At this point, I have sold every Artfully Designed that I have raised, but do hope that at some point I can keep one for me to actually show. Last year I showed Dance Willie Dance because we had sold all the Artfully Designed get. I guess that is not a bad thing. Also, I look forward to expanding the versatility of Zip A Dee Bar's show career and begin working on the marketing and promotion of his career as a stallion.

**AJ:** WHAT GOALS ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?

**WM:** 1) Become a better hunt seat rider. 2) Give back to the Appaloosa industry part of Artfully Designed stallion fees each year. 3) I would love if Breyer would make a model of Artfully Designed.

**AJ:** WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE?

**WM:** "Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man. But sooner or later the man who wins, is the man who thinks he can." —Vince Lombardi



[www.leierdesigns.com/Wendy%20McCain/index.html](http://www.leierdesigns.com/Wendy%20McCain/index.html)



Xtreme Design Equine product line, owned by David & Wendy Jo McCain, was founded in 1996 and has gained world recognition in the marketplace. High levels of customer service, superior formulations and quality products have made it the premier choice of professional horse trainers, farriers and veterinarians worldwide. Xtreme Design products can be purchased at over 700 retail stores and online. If you would like to try a free sample, please call 866-811-5575.

"I won a bottle at a horse show in Minnesota and then started buying it from retail stores. After six months I knew it was the best group of equine products that I had used in 35+ years. So I called and asked if I could become a distributor. They said no, but offered me half the company. A short six months after that I realized the partnership was not working so I bought 100% of the company."  
—Wendy McCain



**ARTFULLY DESIGNED HAS Sired 49 REGISTERED FOALS SO FAR WHO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THE FOLLOWING:**

- 9 Bronze Medallion earners
- 6 Silver Medallion earners
- 2 Club Champions
- 1 Performance Superior event
- 2 Halter Superior events
- 16 Performance point earners for a total of 403.5 points
- 19 Halter point earners for a total of 322.5 points
- 10 Registers of Merit

**AJ:** IS THERE SOMETHING PEOPLE QUOTE YOU SAYING?

**WM:** I say, “Do it, just for the fun of it! Come with, just for the fun of it! Ride, just for the fun of it! Everything—just for the fun of it!”

**AJ:** WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING PLACE YOU’VE TRAVELED TO?

**WM:** I worked in the resort business/sales/marketing for 15 years. With this job came opportunities to develop resorts outside the USA. I spent seven months in the Dominican Republic before it was really a tourist area. That was pretty cool. Also, David and I own a 5-acre island in Canada. No TV, no telephone—just fishing, peace and quiet. That is really cool.

**AJ:** WHY ARE APPALOOSAS YOUR FAVORITE BREED?

**WM:** The Appaloosa people are great. The ApHC tries to accommodate the exhibitor’s needs. And it offers great awards and incentives at their shows along with incentive programs (breeders trust, specialty associations, halter futurities, etc.) I love the color and differences in each horse as no two look alike if they have a coat pattern.

**AJ:** WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE ECONOMY AND THE HORSE INDUSTRY?

**WM:** The Appaloosa market is as strong as other stock breeds and getting stronger each month. This breed is on an up swing. I believe there is an Appaloosa at every level for every budget and this allows almost everybody the opportunity to come join in on our fun and show Appaloosas. ApHC offers a wide variety of classes. From a breeding standpoint, I strongly support the Performance Permit Program which allows us to register and apply for a show permit, so we do not have breeding-only stock standing in our pastures.

**AJ:** WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

**WM:** I’d like to thank Sandy and Jim Jirkovsky for the great Appaloosa program they have at J/S Training Stables and for allowing me to be a part of their program. I try to live by their motto everyday, “It’s not about the blue ribbon, it’s a commitment to excellence.” Sandy proved this to me while showing Artfully Designed and Zip A Dee Bar along with their offspring. I’d also like to thank Lupe Guadalupe Vealenzuela, Ranch Manager/Assistant Breeding Manager. Outside of Texas A & M Reproduction Education, my friend, Robin Levison, breeding manager

“ This breed is on an up swing. I believe there is an Appaloosa at every level for every budget and this allows almost everybody the opportunity to come join in on our fun and show Appaloosas. ”

—Wendy McCain



for Tommy Manion Ranch has been there for me when I have questions and situations with my breeding program as she manages 200+ mares and several stallions each year.

**AJ:** FROM WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS, WHAT WOULD YOU SHARE WITH PEOPLE STARTING OUT AS YOU DID?

**WM:** If anyone is considering starting a stallion ownership breeding operation, my advice would be to investigate and know your market. In my opinion, just because someone has a stallion and a mare, they won't necessarily make a quality foal. Breed for resale. When our economy took a bit of a hit, I continued breeding and bred more mares than ever knowing that the economy would slowly come back and when it did, horse lovers would start shopping again. In 2010 we sold 100% of the prospects available for sale. I have actually purchased Artfully Designed offspring from outside sources so I could have one to show—and sold them also. Sandy and I both had several people approach us at the World and ask why I was showing an I Love Willie instead of an Artfully Designed and the answer was, “I sold everything I could show.” Not a bad problem.

When I talk to people across the country in the different stock breeds, it appears that the Appaloosa industry is as strong as or stronger than the others when selling prospects. 🐾

