2016

90 Minutes of Entertainment, Months of Planning, a Lifetime of Memories

Michelle Bartlett
University of Wyoming, mbartle2@uwyo.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.uwyo.edu/honors_theses_15-16

Recommended Citation
90 Minutes of Entertainment, Months of Planning, a Lifetime of Memories

Michelle Bartlett with John Ritten

Agriculture and Applied Economics

University of Wyoming
For most people the event going experience goes a little something like this: they walk down the street and see, hear from a friend, or find on the internet an advertisement that catches their eye. They think that they might want to attend the event that is advertised and proceed to buy tickets. They then anxiously await the affair. Once the event day comes, they walk through the front doors, hand their ticket to the attendant, stop by the concession stand for a drink and some popcorn, and find their seats. They watch the show and enjoy their 90 minutes of entertainment. They applaud the performers, grab their things and return home. For the spectator, that’s the end of the experience. My event experience is a little different. I now realize that the 90 minutes of entertainment is so much more than just popcorn and entertainment. There is so much that goes on behind the scenes. There are months of planning, collaborating, rehearsing, communicating, and time that goes into preparing for that mere 90 minutes of entertainment for any event.

The past two years of my life have been very telling for me in terms of my passions and my career path. Until this point, I questioned what I would do with the knowledge I had acquired over the past four years. Being an Agri-Business major, I have an abundance of opportunities available to me. I can choose the business route, I can choose the agriculture route. The opportunities are endless! Although it is a good thing that I have many options to choose from, I am the type of person who absolutely hates making decisions. I like to have a set plan for where I am going and what I am going to be doing in the near future.

Most of my classmates have a little bit of an advantage over me. The majority of them have a background in agriculture and a much broader knowledge of the topics we cover in class. I, on the other hand, did not grow up in agriculture. Growing up, my family had acreage but no animals or crops to tend to. I was never involved in FFA, 4-H, or anything even closely related
to agriculture. This puts me at a disadvantage as I have to do a little extra work and research to understand the concepts we talk about. This also makes it difficult for me to make a decision about what I want to do after college. Sure, I have talked about options in my classes and with my adviser, but I have never had any hands on experience. This leaves me questioning, how will I know if I will enjoy something I apply for if I have never done it? Thankfully, the College of Agriculture is very helpful in making sure their students receive every opportunity possible for hands on experience. One way to find out about these opportunities is by filling out the Brand of Excellence scholarship applications at the end of every semester.

As I was filling out the scholarship application for my junior year, a question popped up that asked me if I would like to be considered for a scholarship and/or internship with the National Western Stock Show and Rodeo in Denver, Colorado. I had been to the stock show a few times in my life as a child, but never really thought about ever working there. What was there to do at the stock show anyway? Sure, there has to be someone that arranges the vendors and ticket sales, but what other jobs could there be, especially for an intern? I figured, sure why not, a little extra money to pay for school would help out a lot with the scholarship and there was a slight chance I could be chosen to do some hands on work. Why not? I answered yes to this question with no idea of how my life would change within the next two years.

I had just come back from class and was ready to relax after a long day when my phone rang. I didn’t recognize the number at all. Normally, I don’t answer these calls as they are usually an obnoxious recording saying, “Congratulations! You are the lucky winner of a cruise to the Bahamas!” For some reason though, I had the feeling I needed to answer this one, it turns out my gut feeling was correct. I picked up the phone:

“Hello, this is Michelle.”
“Hi Michelle, This is the Horse Show Department Manager at the National Western Stock Show. We received word from the University Of Wyoming College Of Agriculture that you are interested in an internship with the National Western Stock Show. We are interested in hiring you as the event production intern for the Horse Show Department...”

Little did I know, this conversation would be the beginning of an amazing experience that would in essence decide what I wanted to do with my future. I had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into. I knew nothing about horses or event production. Why did I just agree to do a job that involved two things I knew nothing about? I anxiously awaited the next communication from my new supervisor. I finally received a call that told me to be report to the complex at eight am on Monday, December 22, 2014.

After a grueling semester and finals week, I had two days to relax and to prepare for my new internship. Monday morning came way too fast, but I woke up early, bright eyed and bushy tailed. I am not entirely sure if I was excited, nervous, or both. I arrived early and before anyone who worked in the office was there. As I sat in the hallway outside of the livestock office, I heard the door finally open and a woman walk in. She was a little startled by my presence. It turned out she was my supervisor for the season. She swept me up and we began the crazy two months of stock show.

I had never had so much information thrown at me at once. As my supervisor’s favorite phrase states, I truly had a “baptism by fire.” There was so much to learn before jumping in, however, this was a situation in which I had to learn by doing. Although the internship started out very hectic and overwhelming, by the time lunch rolled around on the first day, I knew that the National Western Stock Show was the place I was meant to be.
Before going to lunch that first day, I was introduced to someone who would become one of the most influential people in my life. It took me a few weeks to actually get to know and talk with Kendra McConnell. She was the manager of the horse show office and took care the entries for the horse show. With my job duties, I did not have a lot to work with her on, unfortunately. The events of the next few weeks, however, would bring Kendra and myself closer.

As I started working on the tasks set out before me by my supervisor, I learned a very important lesson. The lesson was this: not everyone thinks, processes, and communicates the same way you do. This was a difficult lesson to learn so early on in my internship. My supervisor and I thought and communicated very differently from one another which caused a large disconnect between the two of us. I worked under her for about four weeks total. During those four weeks, I worked on a couple of events including the 2015 RAM Invitational Freestyle Reining, the Wild West Show, and An Evening of Dancing Horses.

In my two years at the National Western, I have to say that the Freestyle Reining event is hands down my favorite to watch and work on. This was the first event I had ever worked on. Freestyle reining involves a certain number of moves and maneuvers the rider and horse must do in a time span of five minutes. The rider may choose their own costuming, music, and choreography/order of the moves and maneuvers. For this event, I was in charge of meeting with the announcer for the event, creating performance schedules, and orders of go. I was in charge of recording notes for each performance during rehearsal which included anything from music choice, to lighting, to prop use. Rehearsal for this event started at 9:00pm and did not finish until about 1:00am. Although they had warned me about the late nights and early mornings that were
involved, I was not quite ready for it. After going home and getting a good nights rest, I was ready to conquer the actual event.

I was not told my role for the event itself until about an hour before the event. I was to run scores from the judges to the announcers table where the auditors would check the scores before the announcer read them aloud. Something else I was warned about before show was to wear comfortable shoes. I did not realize the importance of this piece of advice either. The judges were situated in deer stands on the north end of the arena, and the announcer’s stand was on the south end of the arena. Looking back on that event though, I wouldn’t have wanted to do anything else for the performance. I was able to watch the event in its entirety from the stands as if I was a spectator with a little running in between. Through this event, I realized just how amazing the sport of reining is. Because of that day, I now have a passion for reining and have since learned so much about it.

In between events, my supervisor and I still had to make sure that the horse shows were running smoothly. This consisted of making sure that ribbons were set out in the mornings for the rodeo queens to hand out and that the rodeo queens knew how to hand the ribbons out. This was sometimes a challenge as a lot of the queens had never handed out ribbons before. After the queens were set, we would then return to working on the ticketed events. There was a lot of checking in on things throughout the day. Somedays we had up to three events going on at one time. Time management is a must have skill for any event planner. I was truly amazed at the multi-tasking skills I learned during my time at the National Western.
The next event that I had the privilege of working on was the Wild West show. I enjoyed the show itself, but my favorite part of this event was the people I had the opportunity to meet. This event was the first place that I had exposure to a production meeting. It was my responsibility to make sure that all of the performers received an order of go for the show, and any other materials relevant to their acts. Unlike the freestyle reining event, this event was all choreographed and depended on the correct timing of each act. I was tasked with getting the correct times for each act start to finish. This may not sound like a large task, but for someone who had not done it before and was not given much instruction on how to do it, I was terrified that I was going to mess something up and the whole show was going to be ruined because of a simple mistake on my part. Thank goodness, with the help of Kendra and the previous intern, I was able to finish this task without any issues. After the production meeting, it was time for rehearsal. I was a little bit more prepared for the long night of rehearsal this time, after seeing the past rehearsal.

Unfortunately, like I mentioned before, the line of communication between my supervisor and myself was not very strong. At the end of rehearsal that night, my internship saw a drastic change. The Director of Rodeo and Horse Show Operations, Leon Vick, happened to be at rehearsal that night. He had heard little bits and pieces of how my internship was going and that there was a disconnect between my supervisor and myself. He understood that I was not getting the experience I needed or wanted from the internship being where I was. Leon made an executive decision that night that I was no longer going to be working under my supervisor for the remainder of the show. I was still going to be working on the ticketed horse show events, just no longer under the same supervisor.
This is the point that Kendra and I got to know each other on a much deeper level. Because I was technically still the horse show department intern, I was switched to be under the joint supervision of Kendra and Leon. Even though Kendra and Leon did not directly work on the last two ticketed events I was to help with, they had me work under different people. Although the first month of my internship had not been ideal, I was still excited to see what was ahead of me for the 2015 National Western Stock Show.

This brings me to my earlier statement that the best part of the Wild West Show was the people that I had the opportunity to work with. I was to work under two gentleman who made the Wild West show such a success. I was actually lucky enough to work with both of them for both of my final ticketed events. The first was Dr. Lynn Phillips. Dr. Lynn is an anesthesiologist in Oklahoma in the off season, but a phenomenal announcer during show time. I learned so much from this man. I was amazed at his creativity and vision for the shows that he was a part of. Like any announcer, he was tasked with making sure that the audience knew exactly what was going on in the show and making it enjoyable. For freestyle reining, I had to type up exactly what the announcer was to say word for word. Naturally, this is what I was expecting for this event as well, but this was not the case at all. Dr. Lynn had a loose leaf notebook with little notes for each act and had the rest memorized. I was shocked by this. There
was no way that I could do that! During show time, he made it sound as if he the words were pre-recorded and perfect. The audience didn’t miss a thing thanks to Dr. Lynn.

The second man that made the Wild West show happen was Sam Howry. Sam is also from Oklahoma and is an event producer. Sam is the type of person that you either love or you cannot stand. Lucky for me, I actually liked Sam. Sam and Dr. Lynn took me under their wings for the Wild West show and An Evening of Dancing Horses. Sam was a staple in both of these events. He made sure that all of the acts had what they needed and knew exactly what they were doing. Sam really helped to show me just what each of these events meant to the individual performers and to the casts as a whole. I learned that not everyone has the same experience or performs in the events for the same reason. Sam really looks for the passion and drive in people and uses that to help each person in a different way. He takes the time to get to know each person on an individual level, which is so important in this profession.

Another amazing person I met while working on the Wild West show was a man with the stage name of Loop Rawlins. Loop is a trick roper from Tucson, Arizona. I was able to get to know him by being his right hand woman during the show. Not only was he in the Wild West show, but he was in the rodeos as well. As a part of my job, I had to make sure that Loop made it to all rehearsals and events he was performing in. Through this experience, I was able to get to know Loop on a personal level. He was nice enough to also let me interview him for a class assignment. He is such an interesting guy and has a wonderful story.
At a very young age, he became interested in the art of trick roping and pursued his dream while growing up. The year prior to his participation at the National Western, he was on the television show America’s Got Talent. Through the exposure he received from the reality television show, he had been able to land several gigs and perform not only in the United States, but internationally as well. When I sat down to interview him, I asked him about the best and worst part of the job, as well as any advice he would give to someone interested in pursuing their dreams like he did. The first thing he told me was that it is so hard to leave your family behind for weeks at a time to perform, but at the same time, when you bring them out on the road, it is a lot harder to do your best because you are constantly worried about them. The best part of the job is being able to pursue your passion. Finally, the piece of advice he would give to someone who wanted to pursue their dreams is to never give up. Even though you may get knocked down, keep going, eventually you will reach your dreams. Loop is someone I am still in contact with today, and is one who created several memories I will never forget.

In between the craziness of the Wild West Show and An Evening of Dancing Horses, I had the opportunity of working on several different little projects. The first of which was attending and clerking The National Hereford Sale. This was a phenomenal opportunity for me because at the time of the sale, I planned on attending auctioneering school. The sale ended up being a record sale with gross sales being over $1,105,250.00. It was amazing to be a part of a record breaking sale. This furthered my interest in becoming an auctioneer. I was also able to do the same job for the Mile High Select Quarter and Paint Horse Sale. Through this experience,
I was able to network with the auctioneer, Josh White, who gave me several tips and pointers on schools to attend and companies to contact for work experience. I have since changed my mind about attending auctioneering school, but did gain a lot of good knowledge and experience from these two events.

The last event I worked on my first year at the National Western was An Evening of Dancing Horses. This event is a long standing crowd favorite bringing music, choreography, and horses together in one event. Sam and Dr. Lynn were the masterminds behind this event as well. For this event, I again made sure that Dr. Lynn had scripts, orders of go, and production schedules ready to go. Other than being available for whatever Dr. Lynn or Sam needed, I did not really have a job for this event. The second night of the performance was my last night at the Stock Show. It was a very bitter sweet feeling.

At the end of my internship that first year, I had learned so much about horses, event planning, and myself. There is a quote by Arthur Forman that really resonates with that first year, “Not everyone thinks the way you think, knows the things you know, believes the things you believe, nor acts the way you would act. Remember this and you will go a long way in getting along with people.” Even though the internship did not start out ideal, I wouldn’t have changed anything about it for the world. I realized that I had a passion for event planning and that is what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing. It’s amazing how one experience can change your life for the better in such a short period of time.

I came back to school in January with a new found confidence and zest for school. This helped me to finish out the semester with motivation and drive that I didn’t necessarily have before my internship. Several of my friends and even my supervisor noticed the change in me. Later in the summer, I had lunch with both Kendra and Leon. I expressed to the two of them just
how much the internship meant to me and how thankful I was for their leadership. I also had no idea just how much that little encounter meant either.

Later in the summer, I again had to fill out the scholarship application. I once again checked the box that asked if I would like to be considered for an internship with the National Western Stock Show. At the beginning of the semester, I was chosen for a scholarship unrelated to the National Western. I was very thankful for this as anything helps to offset the costs of college. About a month into the semester, I received an email that stated I had been chosen for the Livestock Leadership Scholarship and Internship through the National Western Stock Show. This scholarship is one of the largest and most prestigious scholarships that the National Western gives out. I was so honored to be the recipient of this scholarship! The internship associated with this scholarship was in the Livestock department. Like I said, I was honored, however, I was a little disappointed that I would not be able to work with the horse show department.

All of my life, I was told to never look a gift horse in the mouth, but I was also told to fight for what I want. This created an internal conflict for me as I wanted the scholarship, but I also desperately wanted to work in the Horse Show Department again. I ended up calling the Scholarship Committee and asked if it would be possible to be the Livestock Leadership intern in the Horse Show Department. To my surprise, it was a quick and easy yes. I was so thankful for the opportunity. Again, this internship taught me something, the answer is always “no” until you ask. I was ecstatic to be returning as the event production intern while still keeping my scholarship.

This past year, however, turned out to be very different from the first year in a very positive way. My supervisor from the first year had moved on from the National Western, and they hired someone who, in my mind, was the perfect fit for the job. The new Horse Show
manager happened to be Kendra McConnell. Not only was my new supervisor someone I knew, but also someone who I looked up to as a mentor. On top of this, I found out that I was not going to be alone this year and that I would have two other interns to share the work load with.

Both Ashley Jacobsen and Eric Hamilton had a background in agriculture. Ashley was a recent graduate of CSU and Eric was set to graduate at the same time that I was. I was at first unsure how the internship would go having three new faces in the Horse Show Department, technically being the only one who had been through a full show. This made me even more excited to be returning to the National Western because it really gave me the chance to shine and exhibit my skills.

I started earlier than the other two interns as they were not available until after Christmas. This really helped out Kendra as she was in need of another pair of hands to juggle the work load. Over the summer, there had been a lot of changes to the show and new things added. Because of this, Kendra relied a lot on me for support and help on some of the returning aspects of the show. I again was excited for this because it really allowed me to use the things I had learned and showcase the skills I had recently acquired while being a mentor to the new interns.

The events for the show were mainly the same with a few added. We again started with the Boots and Business event. Eric and I were the point people for this event. This event consisted of a luncheon for over 1,100 business men and women hosted by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. We had several tasks to make sure that the event went off without a hitch. We had to help out with anything that the Chamber needed as well as make sure the entertainment was set, check to see what the announcers needed, set the tables with brochures,
and be on hand for whatever was needed during the event. My favorite task for the event however was the contest for the guests. The guests had a chance to win a prize if they guessed the correct weight for Larimer the long-horn. To prepare for this, we had to take Larimer to the cattle scale in the barns about half an hour before the event to get the proper weight. This was a bit of a challenge as cattle had already moved into the barns for shows the next week. After weighing Larimer and having the guests put in their guesses, we then had to go through all of them and see who the winner was. This was also a fun process to see all of the guesses and how far off people were.

The entertainment for this event was a lot of fun to work with as well. The first act was the Diaz family and an Aerialist. The act combined the delicate art of aerial work with the beautiful art of dressage. Before this event, I would have never imagined combining those two art forms. The next act was Dan James, a renowned horseman from Australia. Dan performed a routine on stage with his horse, Amelia, and a free roaming horse, Swampy. Dan performed a mixture of whip work as well as roman riding. The audience was very impressed by the entertainment. This event was a huge success. After the event, all of the behind the scenes people including Kendra, the interns, the announcers, and the entertainers got to enjoy the steak lunch together. This is
something that the spectators and guests don’t get to see; the personal connections that happen between the performers, entertainment, and behind the scenes staff.

The next two events happened on the same day, and what a chaotic day it was! The two events were the Freestyle Reining event and the Ranch Rodeo. Because the Ranch Rodeo was a new event and I had worked on the Freestyle Reining before, Kendra put me in full control of the Freestyle event. This was both a terrifying and exhilarating feeling. I was going to be in charge of my first full event. Although I knew that I had people behind me, I was very nervous to be the main contact for an event; especially an event as big as the Freestyle Reining.

In late December, I had started to contact the riders to get all of their paperwork and information. For a lot of the Reiners, this was like pulling teeth, and even when the paperwork came through, there were pieces missing. We had to collect the entry form, biography, a list of past winnings, and the correct format of music from the riders. One thing I learned from this experience was that most of the riders have their spouses do this for them. In a way, I appreciate this because you know that you will get everything because the spouses are used to doing it for them. The only thing that I struggled with getting from the riders was a full biography. This made things a little difficult, but thankfully the announcer had worked with the riders for many years and could write a decent biography for them.

For this event (and the previous year’s event), our announcer was Wayne Wise. Wayne has announced the Freestyle Reining event for a very long time. When spectators hear Wayne’s voice at other events, they automatically think of the Freestyle Reining. Wayne and I had a very interesting relationship. We tease each other all the time, but work well together when we have to be serious about things. He asked for two things and two things only during rehearsal and show, the script and coffee. Because I had worked with him before, for this event, I knew to
have the coffee ready and the script typed out in all caps, bolded, and highlighted. Having these things ready to go when he asked for them gave me a few extra brownie points.

Because Kendra was busy with the Ranch Rodeo event, Wayne and I had to figure out a lot of details for the Freestyle show. One of the biggest sections of the show we had to plan was the opening. There had been a lot of changes in the Horse Show Department over the year, and we really want to give the audience something that would leave them with a lasting impression. Wayne and I brainstormed for a couple days on what we thought would leave the audience in awe. I believe that we accomplished this goal with our final idea. The sponsor for the event is RAM the Dodge truck. For an hour before the show, a RAM truck is parked in the middle of the arena to promote the company. We decided to start the show with Wayne spot lighted in the bed of the truck. This made sponsorship happy and gave RAM more exposure, a win-win situation. My job during the opening was to make sure that Wayne got out to the truck in time and started the show on time. It was an amazing experience to see this part of the show from the middle of the arena. For every other performance, I was either in the stands or at the announcers stand and could see the whole arena. From the back of the truck, I could see all of the fans and that is a sight I will never forget.

After brainstorming the opening, I had to conduct individual production meetings with each rider, the lighting and sound technician, as well as Wayne. These meetings were probably my favorite part besides the event itself. We had never conducted individual production meetings before this, and they turned out to be very helpful. I got to know each rider on a very personal level. The time allowed the riders to tell us exactly what they hoped the audience would get out of their act. A lot of the riders this past year had deep meaning behind them. Wayne and I were better able to assist the riders in making sure their message was portrayed through the
script and the way the act was presented. Both Kendra and Wayne agreed that the individual production meetings helped tremendously and that they would continue to use them in the years to come.

Before the Freestyle event, we had to finish up with the Cowboy Mounted Shooting competitions, put on the Ranch Rodeo, hold individual production meetings for the riders, as well as allow the Reiners time in the arena before the performance. This created a time crunch and a little bit of a snafu. During the Ranch Rodeo, we realized that there was no one at the East tunnel to open the gates for the contestants. Because of this, I ended up manning the gate on the east end. This was something I had never done before but ended up really enjoying. With the time crunch though, we were not able to get the Mounted Shooters out on time, delaying the time for the Reiners to warm up in the arena. They were not happy about this and a couple of them threatened that they would not ride in the performance if they were not allowed in the arena. We were able to get them in the arena shortly after and let them stay in a little longer. This was an issue with sponsorship at first because the truck needed to be visible for an hour before show time. We diverted this issue as well by explaining our opening to them and letting them know the extra exposure they would be receiving through the opening. Issues like this come up during every event. The most important thing to remember during situations like this is to remain calm and handle them with grace. This is something that I admire about Kendra, she handles every issue with grace and does not show
that she is stressed. Not only is this important in event planning, but is helpful in all aspects of life as well.

During the show I was tasked with many different things. I had to set up the ribbons for the winners down by the announcers stand before the event. This sounds like a fairly easy task, however, it was difficult to make them look professional and presentable. Like I stated before, I had to make sure that Wayne started on time and that the intro went off without a hitch. After the intro, I was placed at the announcers stand to keep track of scores and times for each act, as well as be available for anything that the score keepers might need. This job ended up being super important because there was a tie for second and fourth place. We also had to have the scores ready right after the performance to send up to accounting to have winner’s checks printed right away. It was a crazy night with everything that went on, but I was amazed at how well the event went and how satisfied everyone was with the performances. Several people, including Wayne, Kendra and the CEO of the National Western told me that it was “the best Freestyle Event we have ever had.” Those few words meant the world to me and are still a driving force in my passion for event planning. I was able to put on my first full event by myself, and it went amazing. That feeling of accomplishment is a feeling I will never forget.

Although all of the spectators had filed out of the Events Center and the show was over, my job was only half way done. I still had to clean up everything from show, make sure that maintenance got in the arena to start setting up for the next day, follow up with each rider to personally thank them, and start brainstorming how next year’s event could be better. The first
two tasks were easy. The last two took a little work. Kendra was busy making sure that accounting got the correct checks, so I took it upon myself to go and talk with each of the riders about the night. This was also a great way for me to get to know each rider individually and to create a good relationship with them for next year. When I did finally catch up with Kendra, she was very impressed with me for talking with the riders and said that was something she would continue to do after the rest of the events. As for the brainstorming portion, that is an ongoing process that lasts right up until next year’s event.

We did run into a little bit of an issue after the event with some of the winnings. The winner, Dan James, had recently renewed his reining license, however, the National Reining Horse Association did not have record of his renewal. This became an issue because we almost had to ask for the winnings back from him. There was also a tie for second place so we would have had to figure out who the winner would have been. This would have been very bad publicity for the National Western and a press release would have to be made explaining the situation. Thankfully, we received a call from the National Reining Horse Association that they had found his renewal and everything was just fine. Unfortunately, things like this happen. Like I stated earlier, you have to handle the situations with grace and humility.

The next event that I had the privilege of working on for the second year in a row was the Wild West Show. I was very excited to work with Sam and Dr. Lynn again. The other two interns were the point people for this event, but I had an equally important job it just
wasn’t as up front and center. In fact it was in the back. I was in charge of the paddock during the Wild West Show. This job entailed making sure the performers were ready to go at the time of their act and that they had everything they needed for their act. I actually really enjoyed this job as it allowed me to see the last minute preparations and traditions that each performer had before their acts. My favorite moment of the Wild West Show was before the Native American dance. About a minute before their performance, the Native American dancers huddled as a group to say a prayer before entering the arena. These are the moments that the public never gets to see, but leave a lasting memory for the members working behind the scenes. I again had the privilege of working with great people for this event. Dan James and Loop Rawlins are the two performers from this show that really stood out to me and that I consider to be friends today. Working the paddock stand allowed me to create those lasting connections and to strengthen the friendships that I already had.

The second to last event that I worked on was An Evening of Dancing Horses. Just like the Wild West Show, I let the other two interns take the lead on this event since I had already had the chance to work on it the year before. I did help them with whatever they needed, but really let them take the lead so that they could have the same experiences I had. I ended up working the paddock stand for this event as well. Just like with the Wild West Show, I got to know many of the performers on a very personal level. Besides
getting to know everyone, the comradery of all of the performers for this show was my favorite part.

One person in particular that I got to know better was a gentleman by the name of Russ Hermanspan. Russ owns a stable in Morrison, Colorado called Bear Creek Stables. I had first met Russ during my first internship. He provided the stage coaches for some of the events that first year. I also interviewed him the first year about his business and how he came into the draft horse business. In talking with Russ during the Dancing Horses event, it came up that I was graduating very soon. He had been talking about hiring someone to manage his stable while he started working on another business venture. I am still in contact with Russ about a possible job opportunity after graduation. It is amazing the amount of networking I was able to do during this internship that will help me throughout the rest of my career.

The very last event I had the chance to work on was the Draft Horse Shows. As far as types of horses go, draft horses are my favorite. The last five days of show are the most interesting to me just because they were the draft horse shows. My first year, I had to leave show early to come back up to school, so I was very excited that I could stay and be a part of it the second year. The Colorado Draft Horse Association comes in and is mainly in charge of the shows so there is not much that I had to do for these events. The only major task I was assigned with was finding national anthem singers for the ticketed shows. I was very excited for this task because it gave me a chance to branch out and talk with people outside of the horse community.
The four individuals I booked for these events were Facing West, Walker Williams, Grace Lawson, and Richie Law. All four of these musicians happened to be in the country music genre. I knew Richie Law before this as we grew up in the same area of Colorado. I called him and he was very willing to help me out. He also suggested his sister, Grace Lawson, for another one of the events. I also had previous ties with Walker Williams as he had done a performance for an organization I am involved in at the University. Unfortunately, Walker was unable to make it to his performance. Again, things like this happen in event planning and you have to have a plan B ready at any time. The plan B in this case was to have a version of the national anthem previously recorded ready to play. As long as you handle the situation with grace, the audience has no idea that there was ever a snafu.

On the last day of show, after we finished the last draft horse event, Kendra, the other two interns, and myself decided to attend the last rodeo. This was the saddest part of my internship. I knew that the amazing time I had spent at the National Western Stock Show was coming to a close. After the rodeo, the group of interns and their supervisors all took one last picture commemorating the craziness of the last three weeks. After cleaning everything up, we all went to dinner to spend one last meal with each other.
It’s amazing to see just how far I have come in the last few years. Without this internship, I would never have found a passion for event planning and horses. I would never have met the amazing people I did, and been able to network with so many of them. I would never have gained the knowledge and skills I now possess and I never would have made the lifelong friendships I now have. I am so thankful that I went out of my comfort zone and checked a box on a simple scholarship application. Without that simple step, I would not be where I am today.

I challenge you, the next time you and your family go to an event, think about everything that goes on behind the scenes and how many people are involved in making it all possible. For most people, it’s 90 minutes of entertainment. For an event planner, it’s months of planning. For me, it’s a lifetime of memories!