

Pennsylvania National
HORSE SHOW
THE WHEELER FAMILY
HALL OF FAME

In Recognition of their extraordinary efforts, commitment and dedication to excellence in Horse Showing and the Pennsylvania National Horse Show.

2023

JOE ALFANO

The Pennsylvania National Horse Show (PNHS) is proud to induct the show's long-time official farrier, Joe Alfano, into the PNHS Hall of Fame.

A Pennsylvania native, Alfano was inspired to learn the trade from his uncle, who shod horses throughout the hunter-jumper circuit and would allow him to tag along to help hold horses.

In 1966, Alfano began an apprenticeship under former PNHS farrier, Larry Bender, before being drafted into the U.S. Army. During his time at Fort Sam Houston, Alfano worked on many of the U.S. pentathlon horses before being sent to Vietnam. He served as the last official farrier of the U.S. Army and was discharged the day before the start of the Pennsylvania National Horse Show. Alfano arrived back home in Pennsylvania just in time to get to work at the show!

Alfano has now been the official farrier of the PNHS for more than 50 years, where he frequently shoes more than 50 horses per day during the now eleven days of competition. He takes immense pride in the trust that riders and owners have in him and his team.

"People walk into that building and are glad to see my face, to know that I'm the one that's there if they need something done," said Alfano. "Being the PNHS farrier is one of my bucket list things; it's a great honor just to be here."



Joe Alfano, Jennifer Alfano, Ralph Alfano. Photo: Jennifer Alfano



Joe (R) with his brother Ralph (L) at PNHS. Photo: Liz Soroka

Throughout the years, Alfano has enjoyed the opportunity to work on some of the sport's most famous horses, including once getting to assist with Gem Twist.

"So many of the top horses in the country, the Olympic horses, are there at the horse show," says Alfano. "If they need anything done, then I'm there."

Alfano's niece, Jennifer Alfano, has seen her fair share of success in the show ring at the PNHS, including the 2014 Grand Hunter Championship and the 2017 High Performance Hunter Championship aboard Candid, who is proudly shod by her uncle.

Says Jennifer Alfano, "Anything can happen. Horses can get hurt, pull a shoe, need it put back on when you're getting ready for a class. So, it's great to have somebody that's really good here!"