

Barrel Racing's

Biggest Fan.....

Interview & Pictures provided By:
Terrie VanVolkenburgh

Meet Jimmy Keffer.
Jimmy is 34 years old.

If you have not had the opportunity to meet or chat with Jimmy, be prepared to be inspired.

Jimmy spent some time with Terrie VanVolkenburgh and shared his story, his thoughts and his passion for horses, his love for barrel racing and his connection with the barrel racers who now call him a friend.



The Beginning

Jimmy was born and raised in Dawson, Pennsylvania. He lived with and was raised by his "Gram." Jimmy refers to "Gram" as his special someone.

As a child, Jimmy attended elementary school at Manilian and also Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He attended a regular public school and he also went to disability class.

When asked about his disability, Jimmy feels that the only disability he has is not being able to walk. He has been in a wheelchair all of his life.

Jimmy collected baseball cards as a child, but as he grew older his interests changed somewhat. After graduating from high school at Connellsville, Pennsylvania, Jimmy took a computer class for one semester at Penn State. To date, he claims computers as one of his interests and he is also now an amateur radio operator. His call sign is ka3vgm.

The Horses

Another interest that Jimmy has kept since high school is horses. The first show he attended was a pleasure show and that was in his early childhood, he grew up around a lot of pleasure horse people.



He was able to ride horses from 1993-2006 at local 4H clubs in his county. He competed in showmanship, western equitation and western trail class. He has even won two blue ribbons while participating.

The Barrel Racing Bug

There is not a lot of NBHA in Pennsylvania, but Jimmy has always had an interest in barrel racing. In 2005 he met a lady and she got him more interested in barrel racing. It was about that time that he discovered BarrelHorses.com, Barrel Horse World and other barrel racing websites.

Then came the webcasts. The first show he watched as a webcast was the 2007 BRN-4D world champions. His opinion of the webcast - he has taken a lot of interest - "He loves it."

He still enjoys watching webcasts of barrel racing. He is religiously there watching and hoping to advise people on technical matters. Jimmy says that the people who do the webcasts are like family and without them he would be lost.

The Youth World Trip

In 2009 Jimmy attended the NBHA Youth World in Jackson, Mississippi. He got to meet many barrel racers and their horses and we thought you would like to share in Jimmy's experience with the great people in the barrel racing industry.



Q & A with Jimmy

Terrie asked Jimmy some questions and here's what he had to say...

What are his thoughts on the barrel racing industry?

He thinks it's great. He just wishes there was more activity on a local level, but hopes it continues to grow in his area.

Does he see a future in barrel racing for people with disabilities?

He said he knows of one organization that includes barrel racing for people with disabilities and that it is out West.



Clint, "Critter" and Jimmy at the NBHA Youth World, Jackson, Mississippi, 2009

"I have known Jimmy for one year. I met him at Youth World last year. Clint was riding "Critter" (Cause Heza Bully) who belongs to Nancy Adkins. She asked one favor of us and that was for Jimmy to meet "Critter."

When Clint brought Critter up to meet, Jimmy it brought tears to my eyes just seeing the smile on his face and how exciting it was for him to pet Critter, something we all take for granted.

Since then Jimmy and I have kept in touch and have become very good friends. We text and talk on the phone. If we're not at a barrel race and its webcast and we want to know who's winning, we just give Jimmy a text and we know who's winning.

My family and I all talk to Jimmy. He's a great guy and really intelligent, a very special person. I consider myself lucky to call him my friend, we love him."

~Terrie VanVolkenburgh

"Amazing and Awesome is how I describe Jimmy."

~Clint VanVolkenburgh

"There are so many wonderful things to say about Jimmy. If I named them all I would probably run out of paper. Jimmy is an inspiration to me and really should be an inspiration to many others once they hear his story.

I met Jimmy at Youth World in 2009. I have grown very close to him and once you get to know him it's like he never has a disability. Jimmy has very unique talents. I know people make fun of people with disability problems, but I think why? Why would you make fun of someone like that when there are great things they can do? Jimmy is a great friend to me and my family, he will continue to be a friend that's like a part of our family for a lifetime."

~Casey Sparks



His favorite moment at a barrel event?
Getting to pet Junior's Genuine Doc at Youth World in Jackson, Mississippi in 2009 and also in 2007 he got to pet Hotshot at the All American Youth.

Barrel racer(s) he would like to meet?
Jennifer Lichtenbarger and Stevie Watson

If he could own any horse which one would it be?

He couldn't pick just one: Junior's Genuine Doc, Red Man Bay, Hotshot, BR Instant Cash and VF Coup de Ville just to name a few.

One event that he would like to attend?
NBHA Open World and Josey Jr. World.

Favorite food is seafood but no sushi...



What is it about horses that helps people with disabilities? Physically - riding a horse is the same as walking.
Mentally - helps emotional lows and stress. Being able to pet a horse is very relaxing.



Who are his favorite barrel racers?
He remembers that the first barrel racer he met was Rene Trout. On a professional level the first barrel racers he met were Mesa Leavitt and Blaise Bercegeay at the All American Youth Barrel Race in Jackson, Mississippi in 2007. He also met Taylor Carver at the Youth World in 2009. He loves all the kids, so its really hard to pick a favorite, these were just some special ones.

What are some moments or people that changed his life?
All the people he met at NBHA Youth World in Jackson, Mississippi have made a great difference in his life. He truly enjoyed the trip and met lots of people.

Jimmy also added:
"I love for people to text me while they are riding their horses, it makes me feel as though I am riding. I also LOVE AUTOGRAPHED pictures of people with their horses."

Jimmy can be emailed at: horsezip@earthlink.net or look him up on facebook at **Jimmy K. Horsezip**.
He loves to meet new people.

Pictures: Top-Jimmy & Red Man Bay, Center-Jimmy, VF Coup De Ville & Ashley Snedegar, Bottom Left - Jimmy, Meas Leavitt & Juniors Genuine Doc, Bottom Right - Jimmy with Hot Shot & The Steinhoffs.