



MAY/JUNE 2025

CAVVY.COM

ISSUE NO. 143

ELECTIC

HORSEMAN



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After the Fair WITH AMBER MARSHALL

Canadian actress who has played Amy Fleming on the beloved horse-centered drama Heartland for nearly two decades appeared at the recent Midwest Horse Fair® and was met with huge enthusiasm from attendees.

What were some of your favorite moments or interactions with fans at the Midwest Horse Fair?

There were so many! First off, it was incredible to meet so many new faces. Since this was my first time in Wisconsin I was able to meet fans who have loved the show for many years I but never had the opportunity to chat with in person. I loved the enthusiasm, but what stood out most was how personal and connected the stories were. Many shared how *Heartland* helped them through tough times, or how it inspired them to reconnect with horses. Meeting young fans who now dream of working with horses, or are already accomplishing incredible things with horses after being inspired by watching my character was a highlight.

Did anything surprise you about the event or the attendees in Wisconsin?

I was genuinely impressed by the depth of knowledge and passion among the attendees. It wasn't just about the love for horses; it was about understanding and respecting them, and being eager to learn more. It's no secret that horses mean a lot to me, but the sense of community and shared enthusiasm was truly heartwarming.

How does the atmosphere of the Midwest Horse Fair compare to other equestrian events you've attended?

It has a really special energy—welcoming, grounded, and full of heart. Some events can feel a little too polished or competitive, but this one felt like a big family reunion of horse lovers. You could sense that everyone there wasn't just attending for a show—they were there to connect, grow, and to celebrate the horse.

What kind of connections do you hope fans made with horses or the equestrian world during the fair?

I hope they left feeling inspired. I have learned so much from horses over the years, and I am such an advocate for their wisdom and gentle nature. Horses have many lessons to teach us if we're willing to slow down and listen.

Your liberty demo with Dan James on Saturday filled the Coliseum. What was it like to be the focal point for 7,500 plus fans?

Honestly, it was humbling. When you walk into a space that big and see every seat filled, it's a mix of excitement and awe. Dan James has a very gentle presence that makes you feel comfortable in any situation. I believe that is the reason he has

an undeniable connection with horses. They trust him and respect him. And so do I. Once you have that, it becomes about enjoying the moment and the task. Anytime I am in the company of the James family, I walk away inspired. Sharing that experience with a coliseum full of enthusiastic horse people, made it even more powerful. I hope they walked away as inspired as I did.

In Season 5, liberty work became part of Heartland. Was that your first personal encounter with that kind of training?

Horses have been a big part of my life since I was small, but liberty work was something entirely new. I remember being amazed and honestly, a little intimidated at the thought of trying it for myself. The idea of a horse responding to just your energy and intention seemed almost magical. But I was able to work with liberty trainer (and good friend) Niki Flundra and her incredible horses Ace and Zee, who we used on the show. Over the course of that season, I learned alongside my character. I came to understand it's not magic—it's trust, it's understanding, it's a relationship.

Were there any particular horses or demonstrations at the fair that caught your eye?

First of all, the diversity in the breeds was something I noticed within the first few moments of our arrival. I was like a little kid all over again. The liberty demonstrations are always so captivating to me, but what I enjoyed most was the uniqueness of the competitors. From mustangs born in wild herds, to the stunning Pony of Americas and mules full of character. Watching those horses move with such freedom and trust was captivating. I am forever captivated by the beauty of the horse-human connection.



Amber with some fans at the Fair.



Amber Marshall and Dan James perform liberty demonstrations in front of a full audience in the coliseum.

As someone who has worked to build awareness about the horse-human connection through education for the last 35 years, I've found Heartland to be a great eye-opener for people to see things through the horses' eyes. Have you felt any shifts in awareness since the show began?

Over the years, fans have shared how the show has inspired them to start riding, or volunteer spending time with these incredible creature. I believe *Heartland* has helped horse owners see their horses in a different way too. I've noticed more people talking about energy and communication. That's a beautiful shift, and I'm honored the show has played a small part in it.

Are there any horsemanship techniques or philosophies you saw at the Midwest Horse Fair that resonate with Amy Fleming's approach?

Although my schedule was fairly packed while at MHF I was able to watch (and listen behind the scenes) to a few clinicians. They emphasized connection, understanding, and communication. That's Amy to a T. She's always been about finding what the horse needs and responding with compassion. Watching so many trainers and riders embrace that same mindset made me feel like the equestrian world is really moving in a positive direction.

I know filming has started for the 19th season of Heartland (very exciting!). Do you have other projects you're working on outside the show?

Filming keeps me very busy from April until September, so during those months I just focus on *Heartland*. In the off season I spend more time on the road attending events such as the MHF. Meeting fans and hearing heartwarming stories of their own horse connection is a very fulfilling part of what I do. I also own a Western retail store located in Diamond Valley, Alberta, called Marshall's Country Store, so in my less busy times I can be more hands on there—choosing new items to bring in and creating new collections or collabs. Above all, I value my time at home. Any chance to spend quiet moments with my husband Shawn, and our animal family is time I look forward to the most.

What continues to inspire your passion for horses and storytelling?

The bond between humans and horses is timeless. I think the best stories are the ones that help people see the world a little differently. If I can help someone fall in love with horses, or see them with more empathy and understanding, that's what keeps me going.

ABOUT MIDWEST HORSE FAIR

Since 1979, with a goal to serve as America's epicenter for the equine community, the fair strives to provide the ultimate experience for equine enthusiasts and the public through exposition, education, and entertainment. As the largest three-day horse fair in the country, it caters to both Western and English riders. The Midwest Horse Fair is owned by the Wisconsin Horse Council, a nonprofit organization that promotes the equine industry in the state of Wisconsin. Net event proceeds from the fair are returned to the Wisconsin Horse Council to be used for grants and scholarships, trail improvements, leadership programs, and communication to help future growth and development of the equine industry. The 2026 fair is scheduled to take place on April 17-19 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wisconsin. For more information, visit MidwestHorseFair.com.

