

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Royals Capture Titles Across Canada

QMS Riders Light Up Arenas from Calgary to Toronto

November 19, 2015 - Duncan, BC, Canada – After a grueling month-long schedule of competitions across North America, Queen Margaret's School equestrian athletes are finally arriving home following an incredibly successful show season.

First stop on their tour was Calgary for the Royal West Horse Show. Four QMS riders transported their equine partners for the annual competition: Kassidy Keith (Grade 12), Christine Coels (Grade 12), Kyra Westman (Grade 12) and Tianna Jerome (Grade 11). "We were really excited that four members of our team were able to show at the Royal West," explains Jodine Buydens, QMS Equestrian Programs Director. "It is expensive for riders to travel from Duncan to Calgary with their horses and gear. When they arrived, each one of these girls put everything they had into their performances. I couldn't be more proud."

Tianna Jerome, the newest member of the Royals, posted some of the top speeds during her time in Calgary on her new ride *Piccadilly* and earned 2nd in one of the 1.00m Junior Amateur Jumper. Teammate Kyra Westman and *L.L. Bean* completed the show winning Reserve Champion in the 1.00m Junior Amateur Jumpers. After placing consistently, Christine Coels and her partner *Te Amo* earned the Championship in the .9m Junior Amateur Jumpers. They also had good placings in the hunters and Junior Amateur derbies. "I felt well prepared and happy with *Te Amo*," says Coels. "We had a really exciting experience and I enjoyed cheering on my teammates. Everyone worked so hard."

For Kassidy Keith and her partner *Wallabee* (owned by QMS Alum, Dr. Jolene Benham), Calgary was the first stop on their North American tour. The duo had top placings in the Junior Hunters and they won the Greenhawk Junior Amateur Hunter Classic. They capped off their time in Alberta by winning Reserve Champion in the Rocky Mountain Show Jumping Medal. "It was a busy time for the team in Calgary," says QMS Head Coach Cheryl Keith. "The perseverance of our riders shows in their results. I'm thrilled."

While the balance of the QMS team either remained in Calgary or travelled back to BC, Kassidy and her support entourage departed for a long drive through three provinces and seven states to arrive in Lexington, KY, USA for the ASPCA Maclay National Finals. Keith was one of only three Canadians who attended this prestigious event, and one of 153 riders vying for the national title. Kassidy and *Wallabee* rode a flawless course to make the first cut, but ultimately finished just outside the top 30 after the final cuts. "The competition at Lexington was like nothing I've experienced before," says Keith. "I learned so much and took that with me to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto." QMS Head Coach and mom, Cheryl Keith, flew to Ontario to meet Kassidy and continue coaching her throughout their final national competition for the year.

The Royal Winter Fair is one of the top equestrian events in Canada and has been a dream of Kassidy's since her childhood. "Competing in the same arena as some of my idols was unreal," she says. "I tried to keep calm and remain focused." Her efforts clearly worked as she won the Junior Hunter Stake, earned Reserve Champion in the Junior Working Hunters and became the only junior rider to compete in the Hunter Derby

Finals. The pair rode to finish 9th and 10th among a field of professional riders, an impressive feat for a 17-year-old junior amateur rider.

The last two events were of the highest priority. Cassidy and *Wallabee* had worked hard to qualify for the Jump Canada Medal and the CET National Medal Final this year, where they would be competing against 19 other top riders from across the country. Keith expertly handled the tricky Jump Medal Canada course and was sitting third when she returned to the Flat Phase. After a strong showing of flat work, Keith moved up to first place for the Top Four ride off. She completed the test in top spot, earning her the national title as well as the Leslie P. Usherwood Memorial Trophy. "I've come so far from last year. To win felt amazing," says Keith. "It pumped me up for my performance in the CET Final the next day."

The CET National Medal Final is a two-day competition where 15 top equitation riders from Atlantic Canada, Ontario, the Prairies, and British Columbia earn points over three phases (Flat/Gymnastic, Jumping and Final Four Test). The highest cumulative score wins. Keith was in second place following the Flat and Gymnastic Phase, returning to the arena the next day for the Jumping phase. She achieved a score of 89, the highest of the night, for her concise trip around a course that demanded efficiency to meet the tight time allowed. Earning a two-phase score of 174 clinched Keith's place in the Final Four Test and ultimately, the national title. "The courses were tough, but I really enjoyed them," says Cassidy. "I'm thrilled beyond words to win the CET Medal, but it wouldn't have been possible at all without the support I received each and every day. I'm proud of my outstanding partner *Wallabee*, and we share the win with my mom and our incredible support team."

Keith's gratitude is understandable in light of the resources needed at this level of competition. "Few people outside of the equestrian community understand that Cassidy's journey was only made possible because of tremendous financial, emotional, physical and technical support from a large volunteer group," explains Jodine Buydens. "Head Coach Cheryl Keith and John Turner of Thumbs Up Farm worked tirelessly with Cassidy throughout the season to prepare for these finals. Family friend Kate Heikkla was pivotal in helping Cassidy remain organized and strong while on the road for over a month, and Dr. Jolene Benham entrusted Cassidy with her best friend, *Wallabee*. The Queen Margaret's School and BC horse show communities, went above and beyond in their fundraising efforts. We are truly, truly grateful to everyone for championing Cassidy and helping her achieve such amazing results."

For the Grade 12 student who attends Queen Margaret's School with its unique nationally recognized on-campus equestrian program, this success marks the pinnacle of her high school riding career. She is looking forward to graduating in June and exploring the exciting opportunities that await her. "Being at QMS, where I can ride every day and balance my school work with my training, has helped make my competitive dreams a reality," finishes Keith.

About Queen Margaret's School

Established in 1921, **Queen Margaret's School (QMS)** is located on 27 country-like acres in Duncan, BC. QMS offers a co-ed Early Childhood Education program, co-ed Junior School (Kindergarten-Grade 7), University-Preparatory High School for girls (Grades 8-12) and all girls Boarding School (Grades 6-12). Queen Margaret's School is home to Canada's *only* on-campus school English riding Equestrian Program and an intensive ELL Program. The school's comprehensive scholastic and extra-curricular program provide opportunities for

660 Brownsey Avenue
Duncan, British Columbia, Canada V9L 1C2
T (250) 746-4185 | F (250) 746-4187 | hpocard@qms.bc.ca

www.qms.bc.ca



achievement and personal growth through academics, sports, visual and performing arts, riding and community service. We prepare students for university, for higher education, for life.

For more details about Queen Margaret's School, please visit the school's website at www.qms.bc.ca.

-30-

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:

Hayley Picard
Communications Coordinator
Queen Margaret's School
250-746-4185 ext. 107 | hpicard@qms.bc.ca



Photo: *Christine Coels* and her partner *Te Amo* smile with QMS Head Coach Cheryl Keith after winning the .9m Junior Amateur Championship at the Royal West Show in Calgary, Alberta.



Photo: *Kassidy Keith* and her partner *Wallabee* were double national title winners at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, Ontario. (Photo courtesy of Ben Radvanyi Photography)

