

## Crafty Lady Creates Buckles with Bling

**A chance encounter triggers a new career around horse shows.**

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Sometimes, two worlds collide. That's what happened when Donna Sullivan of Atlanta, Ga., took her handcrafted buckles and belts to an arts and crafts festival at a local shopping mall. Totally non-horsey, Sullivan was surprised when a complete stranger admired her handiwork glittering with Swarovski crystals and told her, "You ought to take these to horse shows. You'd sell a million of them there!"

So off to an American Quarter Horse Association western show she went, lugging along her bejeweled buckles and coordinating belts. While she didn't sell a million, Sullivan was indeed wildly successful.

"I'd never been to a horse show in my life," she admits. And then adds almost apologetically, "It was so dusty."

But the dust didn't deter her. In fact, she discovered something quite nice about horse shows: the people. "Honestly, I've never met a single 'bad' person. Everyone is so nice, so friendly at horse shows."

Though she's beginning to market her glitzy wares, known as KD Buckles, in at horse expos and online, Sullivan still travels to horse shows in the Southeast. She's branched out from just western shows, however, and has found that hunter and jumper riders ogle her accessories, too.

Of course, inquiring minds want to know who goes more for the bling: the western gals or the English ladies?

"Oh, everyone likes the bling," Sullivan says with a laugh. "But I think there is a difference in the amount of bling. Or the size. Women on the Paint circuit, for example, like the larger, more ostentatious buckles. But that's probably because they get to wear those gorgeous, colorful outfits when they compete, and they're comfortable with the larger, more sparkly buckles," she says. "The English riders still like the bling, but on a more reserved, smaller scale. The tapestry belts that I also make and sell, which go with the buckles, are really popular with the English riders. They like to swap out the colors to go with their hunt coats. That's what's interesting. Underneath their hunt coats they have my crystal buckles and colorful belts."

Yes, who knows what often lurks beneath the staid, appearance of the huntseat rider?

Sullivan reveals that she crafts her buckles "from blanks" and then permanently affixes Swarovski crystals and enameled charms to the base. She's also currently creating buckles featuring hand-cut stones which form one-of-a-kind mosaics.

"I've always been an accessory freak," she says. "I started out doing memory books and all sorts of other crafts. My mother always told me that I needed to do something with my creative talents, and when she passed away two years ago I needed something to focus on. So that's when the buckle thing began. I've never looked back. And now, I'm getting to know about horses and horse shows. Who knew this would happen?"