

Toby's one top horse

Morgan shines at show biz

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YORK — A horse is a horse, of course, of course ... unless, of course, you're a world champion horse.

Hillock's Knight Hawk, affectionately known as Toby, is among the world's champion horses, winning first place in the 4-year-old pleasure driving class at the World Championship Morgan Horse Show in Oklahoma City last month.

Toby, a black Morgan who stands 15.5 hands — about five feet at the shoulder — is originally from Hillock Farm in Sutton, Mass., but now lives among other



Staff photo by Ralph Morang

Dr. James Wilton and trainer David Rand show off "Toby," a black Morgan horse that won its class in the World Championship Morgan Horse Show in Oklahoma City last month.

champion Morgans at a York horse farm.

The gelding is owned by the Wilton family. He lives at Ramsey Stable, a facility owned by David and Kim Ramsey that only boards Morgan show horses. There

are 16 Morgans boarded at the stables, all of which are regional and national champions. Six horses were taken to Oklahoma under the direction of Rand and all placed between first and fifth in their classes in the

world.

James Wilton, a Portsmouth podiatrist, and his wife Tracy literally walked into the world of Morgan horses at random about a

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year ago.

"My wife and I were on a walk last year that led us past the stables. We were so taken by the beauty of the horses and the facility that we decided to get involved ourselves," Dr. Wilton said.

David Rand, resident trainer and Toby's driver in the show, is responsible for the world-class grace and poise that helped Toby win his international title.

Rand, who began looking for a horse for the Wiltons, introduced them to Toby. Toby was doing well on a low-key level, but was predicted to go on to great things. Once in the hands of Rand, a professional trainer with 16 years experience, it didn't take long for great things to happen.

"I would say that 100 percent of Toby's progress can be attributed to David. We are very pleased and

lucky to have him," Wilton said.

Rand works with horse owners like the Wiltons and teaches them how to exhibit their horses to the best of their ability.

"I have had a very fortunate career in that I have worked with great people and great horses, Toby being a highlight of my experience," Rand said.

Morgan horses could be considered the golden retriever of the horse world. Native to New England, the Morgan was first bred in Springfield, Mass., in the late 1700s. The Morgan is classified as a "working horse," in the same category as Clydesdales.

Though small compared to other working horses, Morgans are famed for both their strength and speed. Predominantly bay, chestnut and black in color, the Morgan's compact, smooth, muscular lines are accented by small ears and expressive eyes.

"The Morgan was bred for its versatility; a horse that could work in the field all week and then be dressed up for a ride into town on Sunday," Rand said.

Today, the Morgan is primarily a pleasure and show horse, enjoyed by horse lovers for its athleticism and companionship.

The Wiltons have found Toby at the center of their family life.

"From our standpoint it is a family-oriented sport. Some families have boats or ski. We compete in horse shows. It's a way we can spend quality time together," Wilton said.

Wilton's son Sean, 11, and daughter Shannon, 7, both are involving themselves with the horses. Sean is preparing to drive Toby in the junior exhibit class in shows next year. Shannon is learning to ride for show as well.

There are more shows in store for Toby. He is predicted to do well

in the 5-year-old amateur next year. Rand plans to ride under saddle in upcoming