

SHANNON CASTANEDA PHOTOGRAPHY

HORSES AND CAMERAS ARE HER PASSION, MORE IDEAS PERCOLATING

Written by: Kym Rouse Holzwart

Combining her love of horses and passion for photography, Shannon Castaneda three years ago founded Shannon Castaneda Photography. Her business, currently out of Jacksonville, has been hugely successful; in fact, she doubled her profits after the first year.

It also helps that she is an amazing multi-tasker and has a solid foundation in business and money management—she works full time in the financial industry and has an MBA degree from the University of North Florida.

Shannon is busy and works tirelessly. During the week, for example, she works as an operations assistant at a top financial firm, rides horses and spends lunch breaks and nights editing photographs. On weekends, however, she roams Florida photographing horses and their owners in private sessions or at horse shows.

Shannon understands the special bond that owners have with their horses and takes pride in creating spectacular photos that will be treasured forever.

Growing up in Winter Springs with a mother who rode and owned several horses, Shannon started riding at age five. After taking lessons for years, her parents bought her an Appaloosa thoroughbred cross mare named Dolly. The pair competed in local hunter/jumper shows. Her grandparents bought her a second horse, Lakota, after a trip to Wyoming.

Shannon's passion for photography began as soon as she figured out how to work her mother's camera, and she often got into trouble for using all the film taking photos of her pets and a sister. She took a summer photography class, learning about photo composition and developing images in a darkroom. After getting her first digital camera at age 12, Shannon began taking it to the barn to photograph horses,



This page: Example of a lovely horse Shannon Castaneda had photographed during an equine portrait session.

Opposite page clockwise from top left: Shannon Castaneda, equine portrait sessions are popular with horse-lovers, the LAJUF Hunter-Jumper-Dressage Schooling Show series at Fannin Hill Farm in Brooksville, owner showing her Spotted Saddle horse, Spirit of Gravedigger, another of Shannon's work as official photographer for the Sunshine State Open Pleasure Show series in Ocala, more horse-and-rider sessions throughout Florida.



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which continued until college. She resumed her photography after graduating and receiving a high-end digital camera as a Christmas gift from her mother and her husband.

During the summer of 2016, Shannon was introduced to the manager of the new Sunshine State Open Pleasure Show series, who was looking for a photographer. This opportunity sparked the idea of an equine photography business. Her mom gave her a loan for camera equipment, and after less than one year, Shannon repaid the loan and was the sole investor in her business.

Shannon is the official photographer for the LAJUF Hunter-Jumper-Dressage Schooling Show series held at Fannin Hill Farm in Brooksville. She was also the official photographer for the Sunshine State Open Pleasure Show series held at the Florida Horse Park in Ocala for four years.

For the horse shows, she photographs all horse-and-rider teams, organizes the photos by rider number, and presents them for sale on her website. She offers two types of sessions: horse and rider, and equine portraits. In the future, Shannon plans an equine business branding package.

The latest adventure for this young entrepreneur is Castaneda Sport Horses, where young horses will be brought to train and resell. Shannon and her husband recently purchased their first training prospect, an Oldenburg gelding named Charming ROF, and are actively looking for property to establish their new business. In addition to living on her own horse farm, Shannon's goal is transitioning to full-time equine photographer. She says that day will be the day that she will never work again!

Shannon's amazing work is viewed on her website, as well as the many platforms on social media to present purchased photographs. Contact her for a private photography session with you and your horse—you will not be disappointed!

If you're lucky enough, you may be participating in a horse show that she is photographing. I have many of Shannon's spectacular photographs of me showing our young Spotted Saddle horses throughout our home. **FCM**

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