

## Youngster's rides off with prize-winning horse story

By: Brad Meyer , Courier staff



***Ten-year-old Kailey Hooks of Magnolia pets Simon, her sorrel paint yearling and the inspiration for her prize-winning short story.***

**MAGNOLIA - Writing an award-winning story about the pony you've raised to show at the Montgomery County Fair is an especially gratifying experience - especially for a 10-year-old.**

For Kailey Hooks, daughter of Katrina Hooks of Magnolia, taking second place honors in a story-writing contest sponsored by the American Junior Paint Horse Association was a great honor.

"I was really surprised when I found out my story had won a prize in the writing competition," Hooks, a fifth grader at Bear Branch Elementary, said of the win in the organization's 13-and-under age category. "It's exciting."

Her story, "Finding Your Spots," is a tale about a pair of ponies living together on a farm. Sunny, the rambunctious quarter horse, competes for attention with Simon, a much-admired paint show horse.

Jealous of the attention Simon receives, Sunny rubs up against a freshly painted fence to get markings similar to Simon's.

"It's a story about learning to be yourself and not try to be like somebody else," Hooks explained. "In the end, Sunny learns you can do anything you want as yourself."

In addition to bragging rights and a certificate, Hooks received a \$75 gift certificate from the AjPHA gift shop.

Hooks has been a member of AjPHA for the past two years. Youths

become involved at various levels within the association by attending conferences and competing in several contests offered by the organization.

Simon, the 1-year-old inspiration for the story, has been Hooks' project for the past six months. In addition to taking riding lessons, she is responsible for daily feeding, watering and brushing of the pony.

"It's really a lot of work," she said of the daily trips to care for the pony stabled in The Woodlands. "It's a lot of fun too, but doing it every day can be tough."

Hooks plans on showing the yearling at the upcoming Houston Livestock Show and later at the Montgomery County Fair. "Having a horse is fun," she said. "Taking care of a horse is hard."