Show Readiness and First Impressions

One of the first things a NACQJ Certified Judge considers is the quilt's overall show readiness. First impressions matter, so your quilt should be as clean and presentation-ready as possible when it enters the competition. A lint roller is a useful tool. While it is impossible to prevent every stray thread from transferring between quilts at a show, taking time to remove lint and loose threads before submission helps your quilt make its best impression.

Flatness, Pressing, and Borders

- Press as you go. Flat seams help create a flat quilt.
- Square up blocks carefully and press them well before assembly.
- Measure borders accurately to avoid waviness and distortion.
- Make sure appliquéd or applied elements lie smoothly against background fabric without puckers.

Blocking, Binding, and Corners

- Trim outside edges after blocking for the cleanest result.
- Avoid stretching or pulling while applying binding so quilt edges remain straight and the binding lies flat.
- Fill the binding with batting all the way to the edge.
- Take extra care to ensure all four corners are square and miters are stitched closed.

When judges consider quilts for awards, these seemingly small details can make a meaningful difference. Careful preparation helps a quilt look polished, professional, and ready to be shown at its best.

Most of all, remember that every quilt reflects time, skill, creativity, and care. I hope these tips help you feel more confident as you prepare your entries, and I look forward to celebrating the beautiful work your guild will share at the show.

Happy quilting,

Terri Miller, NACQJ Certified Judge