



AHYA President's Corner

2022, Grace Smith – AHYA President

2022 Convention

AHYA President Presentation to General Assembly



Hi! My name is Grace Smith and I am your 2022-2023 AHYA President! I am a senior in High School, I reside in Region V, and I have been in this industry for 7 years, 4 of which I have been serving as a Regional Board Director, AHYA VP, and two terms as President. During my last term, I gave this speech through a screen, so it's great to finally be back in person for the convention this year! I am honored to be here, and I can't wait to highlight some of the success we have seen in our Youth programs.

My very first experience with horses was when I started taking riding lessons when I was five years old and from there began showing horses in 4-H when I was eight. I participated in both county and state equine activities, and open breed shows. I have always appreciated all breeds of horses, but the day I met my first Arabian, I was in love. I began showing in Region Five when I was 11 years old, and I continue to be an avid competitor to this day! I have a range of accomplishments in many different disciplines,

including Showmanship, Horsemanship, Hunt Seat Pleasure and Equitation, Western Pleasure, Reining and Reining Seat Equitation, Ranch Riding, and Limited Reined Cow. I also have had the opportunity to compete on the Region 5 judging team twice and was honored to be chosen as the First runner up AHYA Youth of the year in 2020 and in 2021.

I became more involved in AHA by volunteering in Region 5 and then became the Region 5 co-director, and eventually AHYA Vice President and now President. During my first year being a Regional Director, I was invited to my first, and only, in-person convention. It was one of my most memorable moments from being on the AHYA board. I remember listening to Savanna DeMott give her President's speech, and thinking to myself, "I want to be up there one day!". That makes this opportunity even more special to me, I am so thankful to be here today! But that's enough about me, let's get into the good stuff!

During the AHYA Convention in July, we elected our new AHYA officers, as I introduce you can you please stand:

- President – Grace Smith R5
- Vice President – Marin Mckee R5
- AHYA Secretary, Carli Marasco Region 12
- AHYA Treasurer, Kate Bonafede Region 14

I'm looking forward to working with this executive board, and I'm excited to see what we can accomplish this year!

This past year we have had several new (or improved) events happen! Let's start with the Are U Okay campaign. This program is dedicated to making meaningful connections with others and starting the important conversations about mental health that are needed in our community. In 2021 the Executive Board launched this idea at a national level, and saw great success and turnout! when we first introduced Are U Okay?, we had a vision of introducing the program and sharing the importance of it within AHYA and how we could implement Are U Okay? into our local regions. Many regions have already started to take these ideas and implement them into their local and regional shows. Now we have the mission to not only continue to develop this into AHYA, but also use this campaign as a tool with our outreach programs. Ultimately we want each AHYA Region to join with, in a mentoring and educational role, a local 4-H or pony club to share not only the amazing gifts that our Arabian horses can offer, but also teach about the Are U Okay? Program. We have several ideas on how we will do this, many, involving educating others, partnering with other equine clubs, providing materials and tools, and encouraging and supporting Are U Okay? events in all of our AHYA regions.

At Youth Nationals, we had several activities happen! Our joint fundraiser selling lucky piggies with AHPA was extremely successful this year and our activity room (aka the chill box) was back in full force. There was lots of youth participation in the activities run in this room! There was stick horse making, arts and crafts, and much more! Also, new this year was the Block Party! At this event there was live music, food vendors, puppy adoptions, tie-dying t-shirts, and lots of fun games and events! We had a dunk tank fundraiser that raised over \$8,000 for youth programs! It was great seeing so many people participate and involved in a community building event! Overall, we had a very successful Youth Nationals and I am looking forward to another successful year with amazing people and outstanding horses.

Our contests are back in action this year, with some updates! New this year we had online mock hippology and judging contests to help teams prepare for the actual contests. Entries were also up this year from last year. We had 7 teams in the hippology contest and 17 teams in the judging contest.

Our goals for the upcoming year are that we are continuing to look for ways to engage more youth. We want all riders to feel that they belong in this industry and that they enjoy the activities we do as an industry!

I would like to start by thanking Region 5, specifically Michelle Pease-Palusun for encouraging me to get involved in this amazing community and taking me in as one of her own. She has had a huge impact on my life, and she has helped me become the person I am today. Next my parents are always supporting me in all of my wild adventures. Last but not least, I want to thank my barn family at Silver Aspen Ranch. They sparked my love for the Arabian horse, and continuously pushed me to be the best horseman I can possibly be.

Also, I would like to thank Brenna Johnson the youth coordinator, Debbie Himmel the youth committee chair, and Cindy Howey the youth committee vice chair. You all have been so kind and helpful during the past few years I have served on the board.

Thank you all for your time, I am honored to be here today with this responsibility. I look forward to this year leading the youth as your AHYA President!