



AHYA President's Corner

2021, Grace Smith – AHYA President

2021 Convention

AHYA President Presentation to General Assembly



Hi! My name is Grace Smith, I am 16 years old and from Region 5. I am serving as the 2021-22 President of the Arabian Horse Youth Association. I am honored to be here (virtually) today surrounded by such amazing people who all share the love for the Arabian horse.

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 2020-21.

I became more involved in AHA by volunteering in Region 5 and then became the Region 5 co-director, and eventually AHYA Vice 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!"

Today, I am your 2021-22 AHYA President! I have big goals for the youth this year, and I can't wait to see them come into action. To start, let's recap what has happened at last year's Youth and Mid Summer Nationals.

During the AHYA Convention on July 13th, we elected the new AHYA officers:

- President – Grace Smith R5
- Vice President – Marin Mckee R5
- Secretary – Brooke Hoffman R8
- Immediate Past President- Brooke Backlund

The biggest thing we accomplished this year was at Youth/Midsummer Nationals we launched a new program called "AHYA, R U OK?". This program is dedicated to making meaningful connections with others and starting the important conversations about mental health that are needed in our community. With the support of my AHYA Executive board I was able to bring this program to life! Through strategically promoting R U OK on various regional and national AHYA social media platforms I was able to introduce the mission and vision of the AYHA R U OK program and set the stage for our very first ever R U OK Day at Youth-Mid Summer Nationals this year! To promote this day and get the word out, I was featured in multiple AYHA promotion posts. This opportunity allowed me to share about the importance of this day in our equine community, but also how this program may save the life of someone we care about! On R U OK? Day, we all wore yellow to show our support of this program!

I was able to support AHYA by passing out R U OK t-shirts and I was able to be featured in a long video about the importance of R U OK in our equine industry. I brought this idea to AYHA because it is important to me that we not only share the love of the Arabian horse through various diverse competitions and shows, but also that we take care of each other when someone is struggling and it's needed the most!

This year the youth board also wants to emphasize resilience!. We plan to use the R U OK mental health support program as a platform to train all AHYA youth not only how to support fellow AHA youth but also provide training on how to do outreach with other local youth equine clubs/groups - such as 4H and FFA. Our youth board wants to build our capacity to genuinely support each other in AHYA, but also show other equine youth how amazing the Arabian horse breed is through connections, mentoring, and outreach with other youth. Building resilience in ourselves as compassionate youth and supporting AHA by doing outreach with local clubs and groups that may not have knowledge of the amazing diversity of the Arabian horse and what AHA can offer all levels of equine enthusiasts.

Overall, we had a very successful Youth Nationals and I am looking forward to another successful year with amazing people and outstanding horses.

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 for 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!