



AHYA Youth of the Year

2014, Jacklyn Abernathy of Region 12



Serving as the Region 12 youth director since January 2014, Abernathy almost single-handedly established a solid foundation for communication and fundraising for youth within her AHA region. She founded youth Facebook and Instagram pages and began writing monthly youth updates in their regional newsletter. The culmination of her attempts and efforts to reach more of Region 12's youth resulted in the election of a full executive officer board and nine youth members signing up for a judging team. At the national level, this young lady is the Convention Committee Chair.

Abernathy's efforts within the Arabian horse community have led her to believe that a resurgence of grassroots efforts is needed to reach out to potential youth members. She wants to encourage youth to join judging teams, attend clubs and meetings, and become actively involved in the Arabian horse breed. Abernathy believes that the Arabian youth community can and will grow - that youth are the stepping-stones to the future.

This young woman is not only highly involved in the Arabian breed, but approaches every area of her life with intelligence, motivation and integrity. An honors student, Abernathy is very intelligent, articulating herself well in her classes to peers and teachers. She was recently named a National Merit Semi-Finalist, and is also President of both the National Honor Society and Digamma honor society at Battle Ground Academy.

This enduring young woman spends much of her free time volunteering. Abernathy volunteers with dedication, passion, and leadership within the American Red Cross. She became a Blood Drive Coordinator for Red Cross blood drives, working tirelessly to recruit donors. She also has served as the secretary of Operation Broken Silence, a student advocacy group which seeks to educate others about the atrocities occurring every day in Sudan. Abernathy helps lead fundraisers and coordinate awareness efforts for this outreach group.

As you can see, Abernathy's credentials, pursuit of excellence, personality, and support for the Arabian horse are just some of the attributes AHA members want to represent them as the 'Youth of the Year.' Abernathy's winning accomplishment of this well-deserved award was announced this past week at AHA's Annual Convention in Denver, Colo. There, she was presented with the 'Youth of the Year' perpetual trophy, as well as a \$1000 scholarship from the Arabian Horse Youth Association (AHYA).

Jacklyn Abernathy is a leader among her peers, serving her breed and others with a selfless attitude and the heart of champion. AHA is proud to call her their 2014 'Youth of the Year.'

AHA would also like to congratulate, Mr. Ryan Melendez from Region 1 as the first runner-up for 'Youth of the Year' and Miss Molly Schwister from Region 10, as the second runner-up. Congrats to all!

Below is the transcript of the Youth of the Year Award results presentation from the 2014 AHA Annual Membership Convention in Denver, CO. The presentation was made by 2014 Youth of the Year Selection Sub-Committee Chair, Debbie Price of Region 1.

Thank you, it is an honor to serve as the chair of the Youth of the Year sub-committee. I'd like to begin by recognizing those who joined me in selecting the 2014 winner:

AHA President, Cynthia Richardson

AHA Vice-President, Nancy Harvey

AHA Marketing Manager, Julian McPeak

Sheri Odem, Youth of the Year sub-committee member

AHA youth members are anything but average! The Youth of the Year award honors one outstanding youth member annually. Criteria for this prestigious award are based on his or her achievements and contributions to the Arabian horse industry, AHA and his or her community. Our past winners have been outstanding ambassadors for the breed and have gone on to represent us exceptionally well - not just in the Arabian industry but in the equine industry as a whole.

Each year, our committee is privileged to review these applications, learn about some of our brightest youth members and interview our final candidates. Each of the finalists presented their own strengths, passions and insights. We continue to be amazed each year at the quality of youth members that are a part of this organization.

Region 10 has good reason to be proud of their active youth members and in particular a young lady named Molly Schwister. Molly is extremely active in her FFA chapter, serving as team officer. She helped to coordinate meetings and events throughout the year, raising money for FFA. Molly is also extremely active in the Arabian horse breed, having been involved with Arabian horses since she was seven years old. She has competed at Youth nationals in a variety of disciplines for many years and this past year, competed in the Hippology contest for the first time, placing 5th in her age division. And just recently, at AHA's own National Youth Judging contest in Tulsa, Molly was named the high individual winner winning scholarship money and a saddle. We congratulate Molly on her many achievements and as Second Runner-up for Youth of the Year.





Region 1 was well represented this year by a bright and charismatic young man, Ryan Melendez. Ryan truly has the heart of a champion. Moved by the events at this past year's Youth Nationals, Ryan approached the Arabian Horsemen's Distress Fund regarding starting a scholarship for the youth that showed the most sportsman-like behavior or overcame extraordinary circumstances during competition. Ryan says that showing Arabian horses has taught him patience and perseverance. He wants to increase youth involvement with the breed and connect them with mentors. Ryan is also a driven young man, actively involved in Key club, Interact Club and the Red Cross Club. His desire is to go on to law school, so he is also heavily involved in a Youth Court program. We congratulate Ryan Melendez, the 2014 first runner up for Youth of the Year.

With so many bright futures placed before us, it was certainly difficult to choose a single winner. This year, one candidate distinguished herself, however, with her carefully thought out goals for the Arabian breed; with her desire to help youth, her unending quest for personal excellence, her unwavering dedication to the Arabian horse, and her perseverance in every aspect of her life. It is now my distinct honor to describe to you an outstanding youth from Region 12.

Intelligence, motivation and integrity are the foundation of this young woman's approach to schoolwork and to life.

Intelligence, motivation and integrity are the foundation of this young woman's approach to schoolwork and to life. With a cumulative GPA of 4.49 and taking Honors level classes, she is highly intelligent, articulating herself well in classes to peers and teachers. She is a member of and in the top 10% of the National Honor Society and scored a 2330 out of 2400 on her SAT. A teacher described this young lady in a letter of reference as "enjoys learning" and "a great all-around student." She was accepted to the Governor's School for International Studies as a rising junior, spots that are generally reserved for senior students. Additionally, this past summer, this motivated student traveled to Argentina to bolster her Spanish skills. With all of her dedication to her studies, she also finds the time to sing in the school chamber choir, compete on the school's Quiz Bowl team, be on the staff of the school's literary magazine and oh yes...spread her love for Arabian horses.

This enduring young woman spends much of her free time volunteering. She volunteers with dedication, passion, and leadership with the American Red Cross. She became a Blood Drive Coordinator for both the Red Cross' summer and winter blood drives, working tirelessly to recruit donors. At the three drives that she worked, the Red Cross collected 128 units of blood that helped up to 384 hospital patients - a life changing ratio. She also serves as the secretary of Operation Broken Silence, a student advocacy group which seeks to educate others about the atrocities occurring every day in Sudan. She helps to lead fundraisers and coordinate awareness efforts.

Our Youth of the Year has also been an important part of the Arabian Horse Youth Association, serving as the Region 12 youth vice director in 2013 and now the director since January 2014. Youth programs were struggling in her region and she almost single-handedly established a solid foundation for communication and fundraising within the region. She founded a youth Facebook and Instagram page

and started writing monthly youth updates in the regional newsletter. The culmination of her attempts and efforts to reach more of Region 12's youth occurred at the youth meeting at the region's Youth Jamboree. At this meeting, they elected a full executive officer board and had nine people sign up for a judging team. At the national level, this young lady is the Convention Committee Chair and Regional & National Classes Vice-Chair.

Her efforts within the Arabian horse community have led her to believe that a resurgence of grass-roots efforts is needed to reach out to youth. She wants to encourage youth to join judging teams, attend clubs and meetings and become actively involved in the Arabian horse breed. She believes that the Arabian youth community can and will grow - that youth are the stepping stones to the future.

Her credentials, pursuit of excellence, personality, and support for the Arabian horse are just some of the attributes that we, as Arabian Horse Association members want to represent us as our Youth of the Year. We would like to present her with the Youth of the Year perpetual trophy as well as a \$1000 scholarship from the Arabian Horse Youth Association.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to present, from Franklin, Tennessee and Region 12, your 2014 Youth of the Year, Miss Jacklyn Abernathy.