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2016 Arabian & Half-Arabian Youth Nationals Deemed Success in its Return to Oklahoma City

(4-AUG.-16) AURORA, COLO. – The Arabian Horse Association’s (AHA) 2016 Arabian & Half-Arabian Youth National Horse Show went back to its roots, with a triumphant return to Oklahoma City, Okla., July 23-30, 2016.

Over 800 horses, 1,700 exhibitors and 3,200 Arabian horse industry professionals, parents, grandparents and youth from all over the United States and Canada hauled into State Fair Park, which hosted the event’s return after a 15 year absence from the metro OKC area. The newly renovated facility, with climate controlled barns and a wide array of show arenas proved to be a natural fit for the kids and their horses.

Youth exhibitors, ages five to 18, showed their horses in over 18 different disciplines in three arenas for eight days. Disciplines ranged from Western, Hunter and Saddle Seat Pleasure to Dressage, Reining, Driving, Show Hack and Halter. Trail, Hunter Over Fences, Sidesaddle and Sport Horse In-Hand horses were all represented at the event – all competing for the goal of Youth National Champion, red roses and the bronze trophy.

A poignant sign above the entrance to Jim Norick Arena read, “Gateway of Champions” and riders rode under that as they made their grand entrance into the ring. While not all emerged with a title, the comradery, sportsmanship, love for their horses and one another made all of the Youth Nationals exhibitors champions in their own right.

Memories were made as newcomers to Youth Nationals had their first ride and those graduating out of the Youth show, had their last ones. Laughter, tears, victory laps and water balloon fights were all a natural part of the Youth Nationals landscape. One won’t find a more fun horse show or more love for the Arabian breed than at this event, which showcases the next generation of horse trainers, amateur exhibitors, owners and lovers of the Arabian horse.

Youth Nationals isn’t just about the horse show either. The Arabian Horse Youth Association (AHYA) hosts their Annual Convention and Board of Directors meeting for the kids who are interested in leadership and taking an active role in the association. Skills which will lay the groundwork for the future of the Arabian horse are learned, leaders are elected and ideas discussed. The breed is surely in good hands with the current AHYA members and Board.

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Additionally, it wouldn't be Youth Nationals without the famed fundraising activities such as the Flying Pigs Contest, the Dever Golf Car Raffle and everyone's favorite – the Pink Flamingo Flock (P.F.F.). The birds could be seen decorating the stall fronts and grounds, in a playful and secretive game of sending a flock to a neighboring barn.

The 13th Annual Arabian Professional and Amateur Horsemen's Association (APAHA) Youth Nationals Clinics were again held, with clinicians Joe Reser and Joel Kiesner. Plus, the dogs were back in the annual Dog Costume Contest and Races. The fastest pooch proved to be a scrappy little terrier! Arabian horse people love nothing more than their horses and their dogs.

Horse shows and fun activities are the main draw for exhibitors, however bringing in the public to learn more about the Arabian horse is also a goal of the show. Youth Nationals hosted Total Arabian Interactive Learning (T.A.I.L) tours throughout the show and brought in more than 120 people from the general public to meet Arabian horses.

Tour attendees were taken on a tour of the grounds, walked through hands-on learning stations about feed, tack and horse ware and in the end watched a few classes with an expert tour guide and the chance to meet an Arabian horse up close and personal.

The 2016 Arabian & Half-Arabian Youth Nationals can only be deemed a success in its historic return to its Oklahoma City roots. Thank you to all the volunteers, staff and of course, the exhibitors who attended the event and made memories that will last a lifetime!

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AHA is a major equine association serving 84,000 Arabian, Half-Arabian and Anglo-Arabian horse owners across North America. AHA registers and maintains a database of more than one million Arabian, Half-Arabian and Anglo-Arabian horses. AHA produces championship events, recognizes over 400 Arabian horse shows and distance rides and provides activities, education, and programs that promote breeding and ownership.

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