



AHYA President's Corner

2013, AHYA President's Report to General Session



By Tori Oto
November 2013

"Good morning, everyone! I am honored by the chance to come before you on behalf of the Arabian Horse Youth Association. I started riding in the 4th grade at an Arabian Ranch in Walnut Creek, California. Oddly enough, the first horse that I hoped to buy wasn't an Arabian, but rather, a mustang. Unluckily at the time, but fortunately now, he was sold before I could get him. Instead, I bought a little half-Arabian mare and I never looked back. I've been showing Arabians ever since, and am so grateful to be a part of this amazing Association.

My first time at Youth Nationals, I saw the President speaking before the Youth Convention, and I never imagined I'd eventually be the one in her shoes. Nevertheless, I was determined to try. Now here I am, standing before you.

What I find truly special about this Association are the

opportunities it gives its youth. Unlike any other sport, we are given the chance to take part in the debate that pertains to the youth. We are given the opportunity to instill change upon our own rulebook. No other sport gives this opportunity to a rambunctious group of passionate teenagers. Additionally, this Association, more so than any other equestrian Association, trusts its Youth counterpart to run the Youth Association. The Board and I understand the tremendous amount of trust and responsibility with which you honor us, and I know that we will continue to hold ourselves to the same standards that you do. Thus, I am pleased to tell you all today the amazing things AHYA has accomplished in the past year.

The 2013 youth convention had more spirit and energy than ever before, and started out youth nationals with a bang. The theme this year was "Root for the Home Team," for which every region had the opportunity to express what makes their regions special be it sports teams, weather, or unique foods. Continuing our trend from last year, we chose not to have a key note speaker at Convention. Rather, we filled time between executive board elections with trivia about each of the regions and raffles of our new AHYA gear. Additionally, this year we held an open mic session about two major ideas that came to the board during our previous board meeting. The first idea is proposing an equitation class for amateur riders so that equitation does not end when the youth age out. We received a lot of positive feedback about this idea from both the high school seniors who will be aging out of the youth division soon and the younger competitors who would continue to show as amateurs. All proponents

expressed that given the opportunity to show equitation as an amateur, they would definitely take advantage of this class. The second idea put forth at open mic was creating a "pony class" for the Half-Arabian horses who are perceived to be too small to be competitive in Half-Arabian open classes. This idea also received positive feedback from the floor. Overall, youth convention went smoothly and successfully with all delegates excited to be at youth nationals.

In addition to convention, multiple activities were held throughout the week at nationals. As is tradition, all the exhibitors came together at the parade of regions, donning sports team spirit-wear. The other traditional activities included the welcome barbeque, the ice cream social, the stick horse judging contest, the hippology contest, and the novice horse judging clinic. This year we were also able to provide a mechanical bull at the welcome bbq, which had a huge turnout and was enjoyed by everyone.

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Due to economic hardships, last year we had to cut the youth national's consignment sale. Yet, thanks to all the support we received from you, members of the AHA, as well as the Board, we were able to reinstitute the consignment sale at youth nationals this year. In light of this support, the AHYA Board members have been inspired to work harder than ever to bring in revenue to ensure we do our share in providing funding for the amazing activities the youth holds. In addition to the money raised in youth t-shirt sponsorships, the board decided to hold a national level fundraiser to give back to our community. The board chose to donate a portion of all youth fundraisers to the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Colorado. These fundraisers include the Flying Pig contest, number magnets, Limited Edition AHYA Hats, the Road Apple Rumble, and more. Additionally, we created a new fundraiser known as "Flocking," 50% of the proceeds of which go to the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Everyone loved the friendly pink flocks that descended on New Mexico, and we plan to host the feathered fiends next year. Lastly, we also brought back the AHYA Trailer Raffle. A big thank you goes out to Shadow Trailers of Florida, LLC for donating a trailer for the youth to raffle off, which brought in \$27,600 in revenue, a portion of which will also go to the Make-A-Wish Foundation. In all, we hope to donate upwards of \$3,000 to Make-A-Wish Colorado for fiscal year 2014.

Last year, when our AHYA President stood before you, she told you that throughout the course of the year, we would work to revamp youth registration numbers. With numbers decreasing by nearly 10% every year since 2006, the AHYA has focused on increasing membership and encouraging membership renewal. While membership is still decreasing, as of October 31st it had slowed down to only 1.7%, with two months of potential membership renewals remaining in the calendar year. While we may not have switched over to a positive rate of membership growth yet, we are very close. This year, the board was fortunate to be able to send our past-president, Camille Waechter, and myself to represent the Arabian name at the American Youth Horse Council in Connecticut. It is through outreach events like this that we plan to continue to advance the Arabian breed.

I would like to give a special thank you to the AHA President and Vice President, Cynthia Richardson and Nancy Harvey, for all the support they have given us this past year. Additionally, I would like to thank the Youth Nationals Show Commissioners and Debbie Himmel, our Youth Committee Chair. Lastly, thank

you to Shawna Strickland, the Youth and Family Programs Director. She has truly committed herself to the Board, and has welcomed our members warmly and freely. None of what we do would be possible without these wonderful people, and we appreciate everything you do for the youth. In all the years that I've had the opportunity to be a part of this incredible Board, never before have I seen the goals of both the AHA and the AHYA so aligned. The youth association appreciates and admires all the hard work the Executive Board dedicates to this association. Like you, we hold this association close to our hearts, and will continue to work hard to do what is in the best interest of the Arabian breed. I, along with the rest of the AHYA Board, promise to fulfill our responsibilities to the utmost potential. I'm proud to be able to stand before you and make such an overarching promise, and I'm only able to do so because I know that the group of girls sitting on the Board this year is ready to make a difference. We are ready to create positive change, and we are humbled by your belief in our ability to do so. Thank you."

~Tori Oto
AHYA President

AHYA Welcomes Tori Oto as the 2013-14 AHYA President!

By Tori Oto - AHYA President
October 2013

Hello everyone! I know it has been a few months since the 2013 Youth National Show in Albuquerque; nonetheless, I'd love to fill everyone in who was unable to make it out to the show.

The AHYA Board of Directors started off the show with a meeting on Friday, July 19th followed by Youth National Convention with all of the youth exhibitors. At Convention, the board discussed a few things that came up at our board meeting with the delegates. This includes the possibility of adding an adult equitation class. Multiple delegates supported this idea because they would like to be able to continue showing in equitation classes once they age out of the youth division. This year, we plan on taking this idea to the AHA Show Commission for review! If you think this is a good idea, or a bad one, feel free to email me with any of your comments or questions!

Additionally, at Convention, the delegates elected the 2013-2014 Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is now composed of Jackie Pakula as Vice President, Katie Johnson as Secretary, Holly Schnader as Treasurer, and myself as President. We're all really excited for what we know is going to be a successful year!

After all the hustle and bustle of Convention, the Board of Directors went out to our annual end of the year dinner at Buca di Beppo. Nancy Harvey, the AHA Vice President; and Cynthia Richardson, the AHA President joined us. We're thankful for all of the support they've given us this past year and for coming out to see everyone at Youth Nationals and Convention.

In addition to all of the fun activities that are held year to year such as the Pig Toss and the Welcome Party, we also had a few new activities! At the Welcome Party, we had a mechanical bull for all of the



youth. We also had a road apple rumble two times throughout the week, which is a betting game of sorts. A corral is split up into sections that get bought by anyone who wants to partake in the activity. Then a horse is let loose to do his business and whoever owns the spot where the "apples" fall gets half of the money! Lastly, we also held a new fundraiser known as flocking. People paid to have barns "flocked" meaning a group of 10, 35, or 50 pink flamingos would be set up over night. In order to get rid of these birds, the barns would have to pay to have them removed or they could pay to have them moved to a different barn. This year the Board wanted to fund a National level fundraiser, thus in addition to half of the profits from the flocking fundraiser, a significant portion the Youth National activity profits went to the Colorado Make a Wish Foundation. All of these activities were very successful and we hope to bring them back next year!

Coming up soon is the Arabian Horse Association's Convention in Lexington, Kentucky. The AHYA Board of Directors will be attending Convention for General Session. We will also be holding our November Board meeting to start talking about our plans for next year and 2014 Youth Nationals.

Until next time,

~Tori Oto
AHYA President