



AHYA Youth of the Year

2013, Kathryn "Katie" Johnson of Region 17



At the 2013 Annual AHA Membership Convention in Lexington, Ky. it was announced that Surrey, British Columbia youth Kathryn Johnson is the recipient of the 2013 AHA Youth of the Year award. The first Canadian in history to receive this prestigious honor, Katie is the current AHYA Vice President and Youth Director of Region 17. An active competitor in several disciplines, Katie grew up with Arabian horses and plans to remain involved in the industry, both professionally and recreationally, for many years to come.

After she was announced as the winner, Katie gave the following speech to the delegation at Convention:

"Good morning Madame President, Members of the Executive board, Board of Directors, delegates and guests. To receive this award is such an honor.

I would like to thank my Mom, Terry Johnson, who is, in my opinion, the most incredible woman you will ever meet. She has been not only a coach, trainer and support system, but also she is one of my best friends and without her and all of

her love and support I would not be where I am today.

I would also like to thank my Dad, Kevin Johnson, for always being my rock. He has taught me so much over my life, not only about horses but also key life lessons that I will always carry with me. Not to mention that I, from an early age, have learned and practiced his competitive nature, which if any of you know him or me you can see that we get REALLY competitive! That being said, when I do get the gate or have a big fall both of my parents are standing there ready to catch me and help me improve for next time.

There are so many people in my life that have made this award possible; Gerald McDonald for always believing in me and for nominating me for this award; Karen Caughell for her never ending love and encouragement; Angela Mannick for starting me on my journey in AHYA; and Debbie Himmel for her kind words and inspiration.

I would like to recognize Cynthia Richardson and Nancy Harvey for relating to me and being amazing women who I can not only ask questions to and learn from, but also for being two of the funniest, wittiest ladies I've ever met. My stomach still hurts from how hard we have laughed in the past year!!

And a special thank you to Shawna Strickland, who is my sunshine on a rainy day. Since Shawna has taken over AHYA, she has been inspiring and uplifting to me. Also, when I'm far away from home she is always good for a hug... or three.

If I stood here and thanked every single person in my life that supports me and loves me I would be standing here all day because in my life I am so incredibly blessed. To me Arabian horses are so much more than just ribbons, it is a community and I am so fortunate that I can say that I am a part of it. Being in AHYA has shown me that we as youth are the future breeders, exhibitors, judges, directors, show commissioners, and so much more. It has taught not only horsemanship but it has opened doors for me, given me endless opportunities, and it has given me family away from home.

I also want to thank all of the girls on the AHYA board because each and every one of you inspire me. This group of girls that I have had the honor to work with have made the last 3 years incredible.

I want to ask everyone in this room to continue to support our youth. Challenge us, Empower us, believe in us, and we will astonish you; we are the change and we are the future. Thank you so much."

Below is the transcript of the Youth of the Year Award results presentation from the 2013 AHA Annual Membership Convention in Lexington, Ky. The presentation was made by 2013 Youth of the Year Selection Sub-Committee Chair, Debbie Price of Region 1.

Good morning, everyone! I hope you've enjoyed your Blue Grass Convention thus far. I'm Debbie Price, Chair of the Youth of the Year Selection Sub-Committee, and it's my honor and privilege to present our 2013 Youth of the Year award results. We had an exceptional year for this award; we received 11 nominations for highly-qualified candidates from across the U.S. and Canada. The sub-committee certainly had a challenging job on their hands! I'd like to take this moment to recognize my fellow sub-committee members: Jane Haven, Karen Jensen, Sheri Odom, Stacey Dunn, and Victor Zakowski.

Due to the outstanding quality of our candidates this year, we selected **four** finalists for the interview process. Each of these young ladies embodied the passion, dedication, and initiative possessed by the most exemplary youth in the Arabian horse industry. As such, the sub-committee wanted to introduce each of them to you this morning.

Our first finalist hails from Pennsylvania. She is in the process of applying to West Point Military Academy and is the current AHYA Treasurer and former Region 15 Youth Director. She created a scholarship sweepstakes for youth in her region, and is heavily involved in athletics and community activities. Please join me in recognizing our third runner up, Holly Schnader of Region 15.





Our next candidate is from Region 11. Chairperson of the Sport Horse Youth Committee and Region 11 Youth Director from 2011 to 2013, she has taken an active role in promoting the Arabian horse in 4-H, FFA, and her local community. She has been recognized as a Rider of Excellence and is a member of the National Honor Society. Please congratulate our second runner up, Klaire Lewis of Region 11.

Our 2013 Youth of the Year first runner up impressed the sub-committee with the level of personal growth she demonstrated over the last year. From Region 7, she is the current AHYA Vice President and has served as AHYA Treasurer and Region 7 Youth Director. A passionate advocate for the Arabian breed, she plans to remain involved in the industry for many years to come.

She will be the recipient of a \$500 scholarship, generously donated by Bill and Corky Fairchild of All Things Equine. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating our first runner up: Jackie Pakula of Region 7!

Our Youth of the Year winner will be receiving a \$1,000 scholarship from the Arabian Horse Youth Association and the Youth of the Year Perpetual Trophy. She will also be featured in the youth issue of *Modern Arabian Horse* in 2014. Most importantly, she will be poised to serve as a true ambassador for and representative of the Arabian breed to youth within AHYA, the equine industry, and the greater youth community.

Our winner this year is a stalwart example of what growing up with Arabian horses can help a young person achieve. A regional director since 2010, she has raised more than \$14,000 for her regional youth program during her tenure. From involvement in community theatre to livestock judging and Girl Guides, she is a talented and passionate young woman whose enthusiasm and dedication is contagious to those around her.



Her regional director says of her: "[She] has worked hard to prompt the youth and remind us that the youth are the future of our local clubs, and ultimately of our association. Our association has a promising future with youth members such as her."

The Selection Sub-Committee couldn't agree more. This young woman made it clear through her interview that the Arabian horse community is one she intends to embrace for a very long time. She expressed a desire to learn more about the industry's facets during her gap year, planning to pursue a degree in business and a career in the Arabian horse industry upon graduation.

She has served as an incredibly active AHYA Board member and was recently elected as AHYA Secretary, making her the first Canadian to serve on the youth executive committee. What's more, she's the first Canadian in history to receive this prestigious award.

We are delighted to have this young lady and her parents here with us to receive the perpetual trophy. Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great honor that I present to you your 2013 Youth of the Year: Miss Kathryn Johnson of Region 17!