



AHYA Youth of the Year

2020 AHA Youth of the Year: Caroline Elik, Region 11

At the 2020 Annual AHA Membership Convention Awards Banquet it was announced that Alton, Illinois youth Caroline Elik is the recipient of the 2020 AHA Youth of the Year award. Caroline receives the Youth of the Year perpetual trophy as well as a \$5,000 scholarship from the Arabian Horse Foundation.



Compassion, humility, and motivation are the foundation of this young woman's approach to life. She is currently enrolled at University of Missouri – Columbia pursuing a degree in journalism. She is a member of the Women in Media club and believes that it is important for women to have the resources and networking opportunities to be able to pursue their passion for media-oriented careers. During High School she was actively involved with her school's newspaper, and held numerous leadership roles in her local 4-H club. She served as the Region 11 youth vice director, and was elected as the AHYA Secretary in 2019. She believes that involvement at any level is important as it improves not only our own lives, but the lives of others through the work that we do when we are involved in something worthwhile.

Caroline's efforts within the Arabian horse community has led her to strive to be a positive influence on AHYA and to be a role model for those who aspire to become further involved in the Arabian horse community. She believes that "our youth are not just our future, but also our present – they are already active contributors to the growth and promotion of the Arabian breed".

Caroline Elik is a leader among her peers, serving her breed and others with a selfless attitude and the heart of a champion. AHA is proud to call her our 2020 'Youth of the Year'.

AHA would also like to congratulate, Ms Grace Smith from Region 5 as the first runner-up for 'Youth of the Year' and earning a \$1000 scholarship from the Arabian Horse Youth Association. Congrats to all!

Below is the transcript of the Youth of the Year Award results presentation from the 2020 AHA Annual Membership Convention Online. The presentation was made by 2020 Youth of the Year Selection Sub-Committee Chair, Deborah Johnson of Region 11.

Thank you, it is an honor to serve on the Youth of the Year sub-committee. I would first like to begin by thanking the Arabian Horse Foundation for generously sponsoring a \$5,000 Scholarship for our 2020 Youth of the Year. I would also like to recognize those who joined me in selecting the 2020 winners:

Cindy Howey, Youth Committee Vice Chair

Hillary Hoffman, Region 10

Kari Amundson, Region 5

Stacey Dunn, Region 10

AHA youth members are anything but average! The Youth of the Year award honors annually one outstanding youth member. Criteria for this prestigious award is based on his or her achievements and contributions to the Arabian horse industry, to AHA and lastly to their 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 horse industry but in the equine industry as a whole.

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



Region 10 has reason to be proud of a particular young lady named Brooke Backlund. Brooke is extremely involved in AHYA, serving as the AHYA President. She has competed at multiple levels with multiple horses in the show ring, but finds joy in growing and building her relationship with the horses she shows by trying new disciplines every year. She is a hard worker, passionate and determined in all that she does. We congratulate Brooke on her many achievements and as the Second Runner-up for Youth of the Year.

Region 5 was also well represented this year by a bright and charismatic young woman by the name of Grace Smith. Grace has been a big part of AHYA in and out of the show ring. She has served as the Region 5 Co-Director, leading her fellow youth in multiple fundraisers and prides herself in making sure all the youth of her region are encouraged and feel included. She now serves as the AHYA Vice-President and cannot wait to do everything she can to make a positive impact. Beyond this Grace is very active in her school clubs, being an officer in the Future Business Leaders of America club at her school. She has helped lead numerous community service projects and volunteers weekly in a kindergarten classroom to help a student with special needs. Along with all of Grace's service activities and horse activities Grace also plays on a club Softball team and has shown her leadership as a team captain numerous years. The first runner up for the Youth of the Year will be awarded a \$1000 scholarship sponsored by the Arabian Horse Association. Congratulations Grace for being the 2020 first runner up for the Youth of the Year and being the recipient of the \$1000 scholarship.



With so many bright futures placed before us, it was certainly difficult to choose a single winner. This year, one candidate distinguished herself, with her passion for the Arabian horse breed; with her desire to help others, and to bring people in the industry together. It is now my distinct honor to describe to you an outstanding youth from Region 11.

Compassion, humility, and motivation are the foundation of this young woman's approach to life. She is currently enrolled at University of Missouri – Columbia pursuing a degree in journalism. She is a member of the Women in Media club and believes that it is important for women to have the resources and networking opportunities to be able to pursue their passion for media-oriented careers. During High School she was actively involved with her school's newspaper, and held numerous leadership roles in her local 4-H club.

Moreover, our Youth of the Year has and is an important part of the Arabian Horse Youth Association. She served as the Region 11 youth vice director, and was elected as the AHYA Secretary in 2019. She believes that involvement at any level is important as it improves not only our own lives, but the lives of others through the work that we do when we are involved in something worthwhile.



Her efforts within the Arabian horse community has led her to strive to be a positive influence on AHYA and to be a role model for those who aspire to become further involved in the Arabian horse community. She believes that “our youth are not just our future, but also our present – they are already active contributors to the growth and promotion of the Arabian breed”.

Her passion, pursuit of excellence, personality, and support of 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 \$5000 scholarship sponsored by the Arabian Horse Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to present to you, from Alton, Illinois and Region 11, your 2020 Youth of the Year, Miss Caroline Elik.