



AHYA President's Corner

2014, AHYA President's Report to General Session



By Holly Schnader
November 2014

Good morning and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the Arabian Horse Youth Association.

I am currently a freshman at James Madison University in Virginia. I am attending school on a four-year scholarship from Army ROTC. I am majoring in Intelligence Analysis and minoring in Military Science and Arabic. Upon graduation I will commission as a second lieutenant and will branch into Military Intelligence.

I have lived on a horse farm my entire life and as many other love stories start, my first horse was an Arabian who we called "Courage." We rescued him, and boy did I learn a lot, like "Plastic bags are actually evil, Tree stumps will eat you, and how to not die while traveling sideways at 20 mph." But, I also learned that I had a best

friend who I could grow and learn with every day. Now I have an Arabian-Friesian cross, "Floyd," and purebred, "Khozmo" who I compete with in Dressage and Sport Horse. I also have also recently welcomed into the world my four month old Arabian-Oldenburg cross, "Tazi," who I can't wait to get home to see! The most beautiful thing that I have learned from Arabians is that language isn't necessary, that everything you need to say to them comes from your heart and soul, and that is what is truly magical.

This is my fourth year with AHYA. I started out as the Regional director for Region 15. In my last year as director I gave back to the youth in a "Six Seat Sweepstakes" that offered money to the highpoint horse and rider combination in the six riding seats. Last year I served as the AHYA Treasurer, and this year I am serving as President. I have grown a lot in these years and that is thanks to my peers and the awesome adult leadership we have had!

Today I stand here as the newly elected President of AHYA and I cannot believe where this wonderful breed has taken me. As President, I have never been more ready to be a leader and role model for other AHYA members. When traveling to events surrounded by young horse lovers, I want to encourage these inspiring athletes and horse enthusiasts to speak up and bring forward their new ideas. Youth really can make great things happen despite their age. This year at Youth Nationals was no exception.

Our week began with a productive Youth Board meeting, and an entertaining start to our Annual Youth Convention. We discussed possibly changing the age split from 13 & under and 14-18 to 14 & under and 15-18 and decided to present it at Convention. We also implemented an incentive program for AHYA board members, where part of each person's fundraising money would go to their travel expenses.

This year's AHYA Convention theme was 'Spotlight on the Stars.' It was also the first year that we opened up Convention to all youth who were members prior to June 1, 2014. Over 100 youth came together to share regional reports, elect Youth Board and Committee members, discuss the Youth age splits and have a great time. We welcomed our Keynote Speaker, Mary Trowbridge, who spoke of her passion for the Arabian horse and encouraged us to work hard to ensure that Arabian horses and their sport are around for many generations to come. We also had a surprise additional guest speaker - one of our own youth members, Tabitha Bell. As many of you may know, Tabitha struggles with muscular dystrophy, but still rides and competes at a National level with her horses. She is an inspiring individual and started her own non-profit to help others with the funding they need to purchase service dogs for disabilities. Both Tabitha and Mary inspired us all to use our horses as a source of strength and encouragement - pushing us to ensure these beautiful horses are around for many others to enjoy.

In addition to enjoying our speakers, we also accomplished a lot at Convention. The youth voted in the incoming 2014-2015 Executive Board of Directors. I would like to congratulate and welcome McCamey Kimbler, AHYA Vice President from Region 6, Molly Schwister, AHYA Secretary from Region 10 and Taylor Kyse, AHYA Treasurer from Region 3. Our new, eager Executive Board looks forward to an exciting new year. We hope to continue to increase youth memberships and to get youth involved. Especially, youth outside of AHA, using the TAIL programs.

Our Youth Convention closed with discussion and a vote on the youth age split divisions for showing. After deliberation, ballots showed that the youth voted to leave the age splits at the 13 & under age group and the 14 to 18 age group, rather than changing it to 14 & under and 15-18 age group. This is an example of how our Youth Board and members continue to prove they want to be an active voice in this, our association.

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The AHYA Board along with the assistance of our very dedicated volunteers, Debbie Himmel the Youth Committee Chair, Stacey Dunn, the Youth Committee Co-Chair, Cindy Howey and others devoted their week to facilitating our annual convention, youth fundraisers and many other youth activities throughout the week. The bucking bull was back at the welcome dinner for the second year and was again a huge hit! Regions bonded and showed an impressive turnout, while decorating golf carts for the Parade of Regions. Other annual activities were enjoyed by all such as the stick horse workshop and contest, flying pigs, Hippology contest, and ice cream social. Back for the second year, the ever-popular, Pink Flamingo Flock could be seen migrating around the youth show grounds and proved to be a great fundraiser once again. The Youth also sold a special, limited edition item this year - a charging station for all smart devices called a PowerPod. We sold out of these at U.S. Nationals! Plus, the Shadow Trailer Raffle again proved to be the youth's largest fundraiser of the year. We would like to thank Shadow Trailers and Renee Pelzman for once again donating a beautiful trailer that was raffled off to benefit our youth association. At Youth Nationals alone, the youth raised over \$10,000. This does not include funds generated through trailer raffle sales or the silent auction sales.

Our final fundraiser of the year is held right here at your annual convention. Please make sure to stop by the youth silent auction in the Atrium and bid on our wonderful items we have worked to collect all year. There are beautiful jewelry pieces, perfect gift ideas for the holidays and so much more.

And let's not forget about some other fun youth events. The Creative Contest proved to be another fun and involved event with categories that included photography, creative writing and art centered around a 'Lights! Cameras! Arabians!' theme. Winning pieces were displayed at Youth Nationals.

The National Arabian Youth Judging Contest was held again this year in conjunction with the US Nationals Show in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The contest boasted over 45 teams and 120 contestants from all over the country in 4-H/FFA, Jr AHA and Senior age divisions. Some outstanding horses were gathered for the contest as well. We cannot have a judging contest without horses to judge and so we would like to thank all of those individuals again who donate their horses and precious time each year. Your generosity has allowed this contest to be recognized year after year as one of the most prestigious judging contests in the country. The contest continues to award over \$10,000 in scholarships and other generously donated prizes. Again this year, with the approval of the Judges and Stewards office and the US National Show Commission, the high overall individual winner of the entire contest was invited to guest judge the Arabian Western Pleasure Jr. Horse Championship class during the Saturday afternoon session, with the official panel of judges. As always, this is an experience to remember and cherish. This year that high overall individual winner was our very own AHYA Secretary, Molly Schwister! Please give her a well-deserved round of applause.

One continued objective our youth board shares with our AHA President, Cynthia Richardson is the need to focus on growing our youth membership. We are extremely thankful that the AHA Board of Directors voted to provide \$25,000 to the youth for consecutive years to help AHYA promote the growth of Youth participation in the Arabian breed. We appreciate their support for our programs and initiatives.

We feel we need to be promoting the breed at a grass roots level such as 4H, FFA, expos and fairs. We need to think outside the box and find new ways to bring members in our doors, as well as show them the benefits of being a part of a local club.

There is a natural attraction for young children to the horse, something magical about the connection you can share with an animal. It is our job to show them the love that horses offer, especially the Arabian breed. Our breed is a foundation: beautiful, romantic and versatile. The Arabian provides us with all of this substance to work with, but it is up to us to take its qualities and deliver them to those first time horse owners and show them why an Arabian will be "love at first sight." I challenge you to share your passion, as I have, for the Arabian horse with your community and encourage them to get involved with the Arabian Horse Association. Tell them that: "Some horses come into our lives and quickly go, but others stay awhile and leave hoof-prints on our hearts that will never, ever fade."

~Holly Schnader
AHYA President