



# AHYA Youth of the Year

## *2012, Victoria Oto of Region 3*



### 2012 Convention

Youth of the Year Presentation to General Assembly  
Delivered November 17, 2012  
Presentation by Debbie Price

I have the honor of presenting this prestigious award every year, and each year is a unique and special experience. Before I begin lauding our outstanding winner for 2012, I'd like to recognize and sincerely thank the members of the Youth of the Year Sub-Committee for their time and dedication: Karen Jensen, Jane Haven, Stacey Dunn, Sheri Odom, and Victor Zakowski.

I'd also like to thank AHA staff member, Katie August, for stepping up and serving as our staff liaison throughout the selection process this year. And I would like to thank Shawna Strickland, the new AHA Youth & Family Programs Director. She has definitely had a crash course in our AHA works, but she has some wonderful ideas, and you will see a lot happening with our youth.

As we all know, are fortunate as a breed to have a host of passionate and dedicated youth members year after year; in fact, we had one of the largest numbers of applications we've seen in recent history this year. I have stood before you and recognized some of the best and brightest, not only in the Arabian world, but within the horse industry as a whole. The applicants for 2012 Youth of the Year are no exception. Our winner will go on in her predecessors' footsteps as an exemplary ambassador for the Arabian breed. She and our youth are in investment in our future, and I'm happy to recognize her and our first and second runners up this morning.

Let's begin by recognizing Region 7 for their remarkable Youth Director and current AHYA Treasurer, Jackie Pakula, our second runner up. She clearly demonstrated her interest and passion in the Arabian breed. Chair of the youth Working Western committee, Jackie was instrumental to the motion to add Reined Cow classes to Youth Nationals. She works for Arabhorse.com as a youth correspondent and serves as a USEF representative. In addition to her equine activities, Jackie volunteers 45+ hours annually with Ronald McDonald House, the Knights of Columbus, Special Olympics of Arizona, and more. Let's congratulate Jackie Pakula - 2nd runner up.

Hats also go off to Region 17 for being home to our first runner up, Katie Johnson. Region 17 Youth Director and Arabian horse exhibitor, Katie has worked to raise nearly \$3,000.00 through numerous fundraisers held throughout 2011 and 2012. She is also an accomplished actress and stage technician, sings in her school vocal performance group, is active in 4-H, and is a ranger of Girl Guides of Canada, a leadership organization. We are pleased to present Katie with a \$500 scholarship, sponsored by Bill and Corky Fairchild and All Things Equine. Let's congratulate Katie Johnson - 1st runner up.

As you can see, the pool of candidates this year was exceptional. However, one individual clearly distinguished herself in terms of her passion for the Arabian breed and her extraordinary contributions to her community. This bright young star of Region 3 inspired the selection committee. She is the current AHYA Vice President and served as Vice Director for her Region and Chaired the Youth Nationals Activities Committee for 2 years. As an active member of her local and regional clubs, she led a highly successful youth fundraising effort that considerably surpassed previous years.

An accomplished horsewoman, her show record includes numerous regional and national achievements in hunter and English pleasure. Still, she cites an achievement at the 2012 AHYA Convention as her proudest moment: being elected Vice President by her peers.

She also has pursued excellence in education and civil service. Not only is her GPA impressive, she is involved in Model United Nations and Youth and Government Club at her school. She held an 8-month internship with Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner during her sophomore year and is an active member of the Walnut Creek Youth Action Council, a community service organization.

Her combination of equine knowledge, skills, demonstrated leadership, and philanthropic endeavors set our 2012 Youth of the Year apart. In recognition of her achievement, she will be awarded a \$1,000.00 scholarship from the Arabian Horse Youth Association. We are honored to have her and her parents here with us today to accept the Youth of the Year perpetual trophy in person.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in heartily congratulating our much-deserved Youth of the Year, from Maraga, Calif., Victoria Oto.