

## **AYHC Honors Distinguished Service Award Winner**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Some people dedicate their lives to finding cures to deadly diseases, some to preserving the environment and others to helping those in need. Pat M. Comerford, extension horse specialist and animal science instructor at The Pennsylvania State University, is committed to furthering the horse industry into the future through forming youth-horse connections. Her industry involvement and innovation earned her the 2004 American Youth Horse Council Distinguished Service Award.

This coveted award recognizes an adult offering outstanding service, vision, innovation and leadership to the youth-horse industry. The person also must have been affiliated with AYHC. Individuals are nominated by and voted upon by the AYHC board.

Comerford, the 2004 recipient, was honored at the 2005 National Youth Horse Leader's Symposium, hosted by The Pennsylvania State University, Feb. 18-20, in State College, Pa. She was presented with a bouquet of flowers, framed, limited-edition western print donated by *Western Horseman* and plaque.

The Pennsylvania horsewoman earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science at Clemson University. Her background includes work in many equine disciplines and she and her family own a small farm and breed and show American Quarter Horses.

Comerford's dedication to the youth-horse industry is unsurpassed. She's been an AYHC board member for more than 12 years, serving in all officer positions and several committees. She and her team at Penn State were instrumental in coordinating the 2005 NYHLS.

Focused on youth equine extension programs, Comerford promotes safety education, horsemanship skills and applied production and

management practices. She also works with adult equine extension programs and with undergraduate equine studies programs.

In addition to her role in 4-H development, Comerford has offered her service to many professional organizations. She serves as state director for the Pennsylvania Equine Council and is a member of several equine organizations. Furthermore, she's been active on the Penn State West Nile Virus Coordinating Committee, which disseminated information on WNV to clientele throughout the state. She also serves on the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Equine Health Subcommittee, interacting with PDA and industry professionals on equine-health, production and management practices. A member of the American Quarter Horse Association and the AQHA 4-H Task Force, Comerford worked to integrate youth horse curriculum and programs for 4-H and the American Quarter Horse Youth Association members. She was also a chapter reviewer for the new Junior Master Horseman curriculum produced by AQHA.

AYHC received a Partner in Safety Award from Certified Horsemanship Association for the safety publication co-authored by Comerford. She also received the Equine Educator of the Year Award from the American Association for Horsemanship Safety, Ayer-Hammett Award from the American Medical Equestrian Association, and Northeast Extension Directors Award of Excellence Honorable Mention.

"I can't think of a more deserving person for the AYHC Distinguished Service Award when it comes to honoring someone who's dedicated her life to helping youths and horses and youth-horse programs," wrote Kent L. Sturman, executive director of the National High School Rodeo Association. "Pat's involvement in equine activities began at a young age and has continued throughout her life. She gives unselfishly to all aspects of the equine industry. Her eagerness to share her knowledge and expertise with anyone who has a desire to learn is unparalleled. Her involvement and generosity knows no bounds. Her willingness to give back to an industry that's near and dear to her is evidenced by her willingness to assist all youths in all horse programs regardless of discipline, breed, skill level or ability."

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