

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AYHC Recognizes Leadership in the Youth Horse Industry

Strong adult and peer leadership and initiative are the backbone of the youth-horse industry and vital in transforming today's youths into tomorrow's leaders. The American Youth Horse Council's (AYHC) National Leader of the Year award, *sponsored by the Certified Horsemanship Association*, the AYHC National Student Leader of the Year, *sponsored by Oster Professional Products* and the AYHC Distinguished Service Award, *sponsored by Western Horseman Magazine* and the AYHC Partnership Award, *sponsored by Purina Mills*, are presented at the annual National Youth Horse Leader's Symposium. The AYHC Awards and Recognition Committee review each nomination and scores each candidate based on involvement in and contributions to the youth-horse industry and the horse world in general. The winners were announced on March 1, 2008 at the 31st Annual National Youth Horse Leaders Symposium, held in Raleigh, NC. AYHC President Christy Landwehr commented on the awards, "What an honor it was to present awards to such an amazing group of individuals at our Youth Leaders Celebration Awards Banquet. I have known most of them for many years and have personally witnessed what they have done to promote the youth horse industry. They are all well deserved recipients."

The Youth Leader of the Year Award an outstanding adult leader whose dedication and volunteer efforts have furthered the youth-horse industry. Nominated were Debbie Barham-Campbell of Charlotte, North Carolina, Lorenne Towne of Dowigiac, Michigan and Nancy Kissel of Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

The recipient of the 2007 National Youth Horse Leader of the Year is Nancy Kissel. Nancy's resume embodies the attributes of an outstanding youth-horse leader. Nancy has been a 4-H leader for 40+ years and was one of the original members of the Wisconsin State 4-H Horse Association. Her involvement with 4-H includes serving on the education subcommittees including Hippology, Horse Judging, and Horse Bowl. The youth all know her and seek out her presence at all of the meetings and competitions. She has worked with the Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup for many years. Nancy is a huge supporter of AYHC and has attended the National Youth Horse Leaders Symposium only missing two. Always looking for new experiences to help youth grow and develop life skills, Nancy prompted AYHC to create a youth track at the symposium. Kissel was honored at the NYHLS banquet with a trophy buckle sponsored by the Certified Horsemanship Association, a framed western print donated by *Western Horseman* and animal clippers donated by Oster Products.

The Student Leader of the Year recognized the same qualities in an outstanding young person who has shown leadership in the horse industry. Three outstanding young leaders in the horse industry were nominated for the award. This year's nominees were Pamela Corson from Miami, Florida, Morgan Nolta of Vancouver, Washington and Laura Akerlund from Grafton, Wisconsin.

From this strong field of outstanding young people Laura Akerlund was named 2007 AYHC Student Leader of the Year. Laura was elected 2007 American Junior Paint Horse Association President. Her accomplishments in the AjPHA range from offices at both the local and national level, to singing the National Anthem at the World Show, to winning an APHA world championship in youth western pleasure. She was instrumental in the development and execution of "One Stride at a Time", a

year long fundraising event that enables Paint Horse Clubs to donate money to a charitable foundation or to an individual in their community. She was named 2007 American Junior Paint Horse Association Member of the Year and served President of the Wisconsin Junior Paint Horse Association at age 10. Other activities include: Big Brothers Big Sisters, Volunteer coach of the Grafton Gladiators Cheerleading Program, a varsity cheerleader and gymnast, a waterskier on the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh ski team, an honor roll student, and a leader in her student council. Akerlund was honored at the NYHLS banquet with a \$500 Educational Scholarship sponsored by the ***Oster Products***, a framed western print donated by ***Western Horseman*** and animal clippers donated by Oster Products.

A new award was added this year, the AYHC Partnership Award. This award has been created to recognize an organization for a program or formal activity that provides leadership and inspiration to young people in accordance with the overall mission of AYHC exemplified by its motto, "Connecting Kids through Horses." There were four nominees for the inaugural award. Nominees included The Hillsborough County, NY 4-H Horse Program, Harness Horse Youth Foundation's Harness Racing Youth League, Youth Beats Magazine and Equine Studies Program Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center High School.

The 2007 AYHC Partnership Award was presented to Ellen Taylor of the Harness Horse Youth Foundation for its Harness Racing Youth League. The Harness Racing Youth League is an endeavor of the Harness Horse Youth Foundation – which was founded in 1976 with a mission to provide young people experiences with harness horses. The league's first camp was put on in 1999 at Hoosier Park in Indiana, with 20 youngsters ages 9-13. Since then, the camps have expanded, with 5 different camps held each year across North America. Each camp has 12 kids and the duration of the camp is 5 days. During this time each student learns everything about the daily routine of caring for a horse and more specifically harness horses. The Harness Racing Youth League received clippers sponsored by the ***Oster Products***, a framed western print donated by ***Western Horseman*** and a plaque sponsored by Purina Mills.

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes a person who has show dedication and service to AYHC. Robert Mowery was recognized by AYHC as showing extreme dedication not only to AYHC, but also to the youth horse industry. Dr. Robert Mowrey is currently a Professor and Extension Horse Commodity Coordinator at North Carolina State University. He provides leadership to the horse extension, teaching and research programs in the Animal Science Department. He has published over 700 Extension bulletins, popular press articles and news articles. Bob has been on the AYHC board for more than 10 years, currently serving as treasurer. He helped author and publish AYHC's Horse Industry Handbook and has been a presenter at many National Youth Horse Leaders Symposiums, hosting three of them. He has coached North Carolina State 4-H Horse Judging teams to multiple contest wins at the All-American Quarter Horse Congress, Eastern National 4-H Roundup, American Quarter Horse Youth World Championships, Arabian Nationals, Southern Regional 4-H Championship and the Southern Invitational Judging Contests. Bob was presented with a plaque, a framed print donated by Western Horseman and clippers sponsored by Oster Products.

The AYHC awards program is a member benefit and if AYHC members wish to nominate an outstanding adult or student volunteer leader for 2008, watch for the nomination form in the June 2008 AYHC newsletter or download the form from www.ayhc.com The award will be presented at the 32nd annual NYHLS to be held in Lincoln, NE on March 27 through 29, 2009.

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*AYHC is the umbrella organization providing encouragement, communication,
leadership & resources to serve and promote the youth horse industry.*