

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 31, 2009**

### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Cindy Schonholtz, American Youth Horse Council  
719-440-7255, [info@ayhc.com](mailto:info@ayhc.com), [www.ayhc.com](http://www.ayhc.com)  
photos available

## **AYHC Recognizes Leadership in the Youth Horse Industry**

Strong adult and peer leadership are the backbone of the youth-horse industry and vital in transforming today's youth 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 Junior Master Horseman*, the AYHC Distinguished Service Award, *sponsored by Cornell University/NY 4-H Horse Program*, and the AYHC Partnership Award, *sponsored by University of Louisville, Equine Industry Program*, are presented at the annual National Youth Horse Leaders Symposium. The AYHC Awards and Recognition Committee reviews 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 28, 2009 at the 32nd Annual National Youth Horse Leaders Symposium, held in Lincoln, NE. Kathy Anderson, AYHC President, commented on the awards, "It is AYHC's way of recognizing those who contribute their time and hard work to the development of youth and adults involved with horses".

The Youth Leader of the Year Award is given to an outstanding adult leader whose dedication and volunteer efforts have furthered the youth-horse industry. Nominated were Cecelia Harshfield of Sutherland, Nebraska and Jo Gelinias of Gofftown, New Jersey.

The recipient of the 2008 National Youth Horse Leader of the Year is Jo Gelinias. Jo is president of the 4-H Hillsborough County Parent/Leader/Teen Association and the 4-H Hillsborough County Horse Council. Jo has been a leader in recruiting volunteers to assist at local, county and state events. Jo has served as the Hillsborough County head chaperone at the state horse show for more than 20 years. More recently, she also took on the role of barn manager for the NH 4-H show barn at the Eastern States Exposition Horse Show in West Springfield, MA. Jo's 4-H club members have won local, state and national competitions in 4-H judging, quiz bowl and communications. Jo has been a coach for New Hampshire state 4-H communications and quiz bowl teams attending the Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup Competition in Louisville, KY. Jo has taught the value of hard work, practice, dedication and learning to young people through the 4-H Hoofbeats Club. She has offered her horses to countless 4-H horse youth for their yearly horse projects, opening the horse world to those who would not have been able to have their own horses. Gelinias 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 Wrangler National Finals Gear Bag donated by Justin Boots.

The Student Leader of the Year recognized the same qualities in an outstanding young person who has shown leadership in the horse industry. Five outstanding young leaders in the horse industry were nominated for the award. This year's nominees were Kelly Peterson from Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, Zane Pluhar of Canyon, Texas, Jessica Sagui of Oakhurst, New Jersey, Jessica Steinke, Vancouver, Washington and Jocelyn Tanner from Webster, New Hampshire.

From this strong field of outstanding young people, Kelly Peterson was named 2008 AYHC Student Leader of the Year. Kelly is a member of the Hayburners 4-H Club, and holds numerous memberships in local, state and national 4-H, Quarter Horse and Appalossa Associations. Additionally she serves as the President of the Wisconsin State 4-H Youth Horse Assn.; NE Wisconsin District 4-H

Horse Assn. President; Haynesville 4-H Club Treasurer among other leadership roles. Kelly is committed to furthering her mission of working with horses' natural instincts and behaviors, especially when she works with other youth. She believes that today's youth are the horsemen of tomorrow. She strives to teach other youth that 'kind and easy' training works best with their horses. She also teaches by incorporating humor, by relaying events her peers can relate to, by sharing her own personal stories, by using modern teen jargon and by involving her peers in fun physical activities. She brings a profound positive energy to every task she undertakes and is a "role model to youth and adults alike", says Nancy Kissel. Out of the horse realm, she became President of a group designed to develop and implement a program to educate peers about underage drinking, its consequences and alternative to drinking. Peterson was honored at the NYHLS banquet with a \$500 Educational Scholarship sponsored by the *Junior Master Horseman*, a framed western print donated by *Western Horseman* and Wrangler National Finals Gear Bag donated by Justin Boots.

The AYHC Partnership Award recognizes 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." The 2008 winner is Equine Studies Program Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center High School. This Equine Studies Program provides unique, broad-based educational opportunities for students having a special interest in horses and the horse industry. Not only is the program designed to provide specialized incentives to keep students engaged and performing well in school, but is also designed to give students greater access to the horse industry and more preparation for success in the Equine Science, Animal Science, and Veterinary Medicine fields. The Equine Studies Program Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center High School received a framed western print donated by *Western Horseman* and Wrangler National Finals Gear Bag donated by Justin Boots.

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes a person who has shown dedication and service to AYHC. Christy Landwehr was recognized by AYHC for showing extreme dedication not only to AYHC, where she serves as the immediate past president, but also to the youth horse industry. She has been active in the horse industry for over 25 years. Hunter/jumper, dressage, western pleasure, endurance riding and saddle seat equitation are just some of the disciplines Christy has competed in at the local, regional and national levels. She has been teaching children and adults how to ride for over 15 years. Christy is a Master Level Riding Instructor through Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) as well as an AQHA Professional Horseman. Additionally, she has been involved in 4-H, FFA and Pony Club. She also founded and coached the University of Colorado at Boulder equestrian team. Kathy Anderson, AYHC President, states, "Christy has been a fixture within AYHC bringing to the organization her enthusiasm, creativity and extensive knowledge and love of horse's and their connection to youth." Christy was presented with a plaque, a framed western print donated by *Western Horseman* and Wrangler National Finals Gear Bag donated by Justin Boots. Christy has been a fixture within AYHC bringing to the organization her enthusiasm, creativity and extensive knowledge and love of horse's and their connection to youth.

The AYHC awards program is a member benefit and if AYHC members wish to nominate an outstanding adult or student volunteer leader for 2009, watch for the nomination form in the June 2009 AYHC newsletter or download the form from [www.ayhc.com](http://www.ayhc.com) The award will be presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual NYHLS to be held in Lexington, KY on March 19 through 21, 2010.

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