

AYHC Names National Youth Horse Leader of the Year

PRESS RELEASE

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Strong adult leadership and initiative are the backbone of the youth-horse industry and vital in transforming today's youths into tomorrow's leaders. The National Youth Horse Leader of the Year award, presented at the annual National Youth Horse Leader's Symposium, recognizes an outstanding adult leader whose dedication and volunteer efforts have furthered the youth-horse industry into the future.

Starting in June, local horse organization members and industry leaders submit nominations and letters of recommendation for their favorite adult volunteer leaders. Then the AYHC Awards and Recognition Committee reviews each nomination and scores each candidate based on his or her involvement in and contributions to the youth-horse industry and the horse world in general.

At the 2005 NYHLS, hosted by The Pennsylvania State University, Feb. 18-20, in State College, Pa., four nominees were spotlighted in a presentation entitled "The Colors of the Youth Horse Industry." According to Jennifer Denison, AYHC Awards and Recognition Committee Chair, Ethel Coleman, Indiana, Pa.; Rick Hawthorne, Lake View Terrace, Calif.; Kerith Lemon, New York, New York; and Betsy Ulrich, Pottstown, Pa., "all help youths color the horse world in their own special ways."

However, only one winner can be selected, and this year the honor went to Ethel Coleman. Ethel's resume embodies the attributes of an outstanding youth horse leader. As a horse crazy youth, Coleman was a 10-year 4-H member and teen leader. In fact, she was coaching her county's horse-bowl team before she qualified to become a 4-H leader.

When she turned 18, she immediately graduated from 4-H member to leader of the Trailblazers 4-H Horse Club in Indiana County, Pa., a post she's held for 21 years. During this time, she's served on numerous

committees, coached champion horse-bowl, hippology and judging teams, and has willingly shared her knowledge and protocol with other members and counties. “She has many times faced the challenge of taking kids who don’t know much and turning them into knowledgeable, well-prepared contestants who want to come out for the teams the next year,” writes two of her club members.

Furthermore, when one of her 4-H member’s is horseless due to injury, illness or death, Coleman doesn’t hesitate to loan the member one of her horses. Her innovation, fund-raising, promotion and philanthropic efforts earned her the Indiana County Outstanding 4-H Volunteer award in 1995 and a United Way Rose Award in 2001.

Part of what makes Coleman so special as a leader is that, “She acts like a kid, too!” write her horse-club members. “She makes learning fun. Whether she’s having kids play for candy, coming up with some silly acronym they couldn’t possibly forget or taking kids on field trips to local farms to see things in real life, she’s always trying to get the kids to have a good time while they’re learning.” Other club members describe Coleman as enthusiastic, kind and patient.

Coleman was honored at the NYHLS banquet with a bouquet of flowers, framed, limited-edition western print donated by *Western Horseman* and a plaque. Mary Fay, Westford, Vt., the 2003 National Youth Horse Leader of the Year, presented Coleman with her award.

To nominate an outstanding adult volunteer leader for the 2005 National Youth Horse Leader of the Year award, watch for the nomination form in the June 2004 AYHC newsletter. The award will be presented at the 29th annual NYHLS to be held at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla., in 2006.

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