

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 Youth Horse 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*, are presented at the annual National Youth Horse Leader's Symposium. 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. The winners were announced on March 10, 2007 at the 30th Annual National Youth Horse Leaders Symposium, held in Denver, Colorado.

The Youth Leader of the Year recognizes an outstanding adult leader whose dedication and volunteer efforts have furthered the youth-horse industry. Nominated were Pamila Cronkhite, Son Rise Ranch, Vancouver, WA, Cecilia Harshfield, Lincoln County 4-H, Sutherland, NE, Nancy Harvey, Arabian Horse Youth Association, Sierra Madres, CA and Kerith Lemon, Vaulting Coach, New York, NY and Diane Schroeder, Missouri Valley Morgan Horse Club, Republican City, NE.

This year's recipient of the 2006 National Youth Horse Leader of the Year is Pamila Cronkhite. Pamila's resume embodies the attributes of an outstanding youth-horse leader. Her positive experiences with horses as a youth made her realize she wanted to teach youth. 10 years ago she dedicated her life and founded Son Rise Ranch which made horses and youth her full-time career turning her ranch into a youth development equine facility with numerous levels of weekly riding lessons teaching several different disciplines and motivational extracurricular horse related activities plus other activities. Pam is a Certified Riding Instructor through the Certified Horsemanship Association, holds an office in the local Backcountry Horsemen, and is an advisor to the Jr. Chapter and a member of several horse related organizations. Pam involves youth and their parents in a program that mentors productive skills, creates self esteem through accomplishments while perfecting the proficiency of horsemanship in a recreational way. One of her students, Cayla Sovie said, "At Son Rise Ranch, you don't only learn how to ride a horse. You learn skills that will help you in other parts of life." Another student, Laura Kehoe stated, "I don't know what I'd do without Son Rise Ranch, it's practically my second home. I've learned so much since I came to the ranch, not just about horses, but also about myself. I've learned I can do all kinds of things, that I can do anything I set my mind to and it's all thanks to Pam and Son Rise Ranch."

The Student Leader of the Year recognized the same qualities in an outstanding youth person who has shown leadership in the horse industry. Eight outstanding young leaders in the horse industry were nominated for the inaugural award. This year's nominees were Ashley Bennett, Avis, PA, Pamela Corson, Miami, FL, Hannah Hebert, Weare, NH, Jodi Lenhart, Bolivar, PA, Tannis Marley, Huntington, PA, Matthew McMurtrey, Winter Garden, FL, Robert Munson, Sandwich, IL and Rebecca Stevens, Hutchinson, MN.

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From this strong field of outstanding young people the judges selected Jodi Lenhart as the inaugural winner of AYHC's National Student Leader of the Year. 17-year-old Jodi has been a member of Westmoreland County 4-H Horse program for 10 years and was selected as Outstanding 4-H Horse Member in PA in 2005. She participates in 4-H horse shows, in the Westmoreland County Equestrian Drill team, Westmoreland County Hippology Team and promoting the Arabian breed. She has served as a camp counselor at 4-H Horse Camp. She is a member of Teens Against Tobacco Use and has served as an officer in many local clubs. She teaches other riding and participates in fund raising. Lacey Petika & Kayla Cahill has this to say about Jodi, "Jodi has been there for both of us in the last four years without her encouragement and assistance we would never had accomplished so much ourselves." Jodi's 4-H Leader Joann Logan said this about her, "Jodi is a young person who has overcome her feelings of shyness, her personal doubts, and has made a difference in both the lives of people and horses."

Lenhart 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 Protégé animal clippers donated by Oster Products.

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes a person who has show dedication and service to AYHC. Ashley Griffin of Lexington, Kentucky was recognized by AYHC as showing extreme dedication not only to AYHC, but also to the youth horse industry. Ashley has been on the AYHC for more than 10 years, serving as Vice President, President and Chair of the Research and Data Statistics Committee. She has worked extensively on publications, especially the very popular Youth Leaders Manual. She has been a speaker at many symposiums and helped organize the event last time it was in Kentucky in the 90's. She is currently the Content Design Leader for the National eXtension Initiative.

The AYHC awards program is a member benefit and if AYHC members wish to nominate an outstanding adult or student volunteer leader for 2007, watch for the nomination form in the June 2007 AYHC newsletter or download the form from www.ayhc.com The award will be presented at the 31st annual NYHLS to be held in Raleigh, NC on February 29 – March 2, 2008.

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