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Certified Horsemanship Association Honors Two CHA Certified Instructors at the 2015 CHA International Conference

(October 2015) – There is a lot that happens during the Certified Horsemanship Association’s International Conference every year. Attendees learn new techniques and knowledge to take back with them to their students and their businesses. There is socializing, networking, and inspiration on every day of the conference, which culminates with the Awards Banquet. During this year’s CHA Awards Banquet on Saturday night, October 24, 2015, six prestigious awards were handed out to leaders in their field and to those who idealize everything CHA stands for. This year, two of CHA’s best instructors, Anne Brzezicki and Pat Leach, were honored when they received the CHA Instructor of the Year and the CHA Clinic Instructor of the Year Awards, respectively.

“Our individual certified instructors are the life blood of our association. Without you, we would not exist,” said Christy Landwehr, CHA’s Chief Executive Officer, as she prepared to honor Anne Brzezicki of Murfreesboro, TN, with the CHA Instructor of the Year Award. Brzezicki, who has been dedicated to her students for several decades, was nominated for the award by those very students. Those students nominated her with comments such as, “She is constantly pushing for her riders to become better at their craft—from creative teaching techniques to out-of-the-box exercises to drive home a concept or theory,” and “Anne has taught me to embrace my strengths and weaknesses. She has taught me that I am a very strong, smart, and ambitious individual that has nowhere to go but up. She has taught me that regardless of where I have come from and whatever struggles may have been or may arise that I can handle it.”

These comments exemplify how teaching horseback riding is not just a “job,” and it doesn’t always just involve only teaching students the mechanics of riding. Brzezicki has indeed “coached it all” as one of the students writes. Currently she is the Director of the Equestrian Program at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and the coach of the equestrian team. Brzezicki has coached countless Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) teams, as well as individuals, to success at the regional and national level. This Connecticut native got her start on an IHSA team when she started one as a second-year student at the University of Connecticut, and then she and her team went on to win the IHSA National Championship. After graduation, she then coached the team to the 1972 National Hunt Seat Championship

title. She and Kenny Copenhaver introduced the western horsemanship divisions to IHSA in 1977, the same year she started the IHSA team at MTSU. She would then start a third team at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, and served as the coach while she attended graduate school there. Brzezicki has also competed in USEF and AQHA shows and had students win at the All-American Quarter Horse Congress and at the AQHA World Championships. Her background also includes teaching at 4-H horse camps in Connecticut and Tennessee. In addition, Brzezicki has been an active member of the IHSA Board of Directors, AQHA, and a big supporter of 4-H. She was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from IHSA in 2003 and IHSA Regional Coach of the Year in 2004. Brzezicki is a CHA Master Instructor, a CHA Assistant Clinic Instructor, a member of the CHA Executive Committee, and Co-Chair of the CHA Education and Training Committee.

“Recognition by fellow professionals who share a lifetime of striving for excellence in teaching is humbling,” said Brzezicki. “When the recognition is the result of student input across many places and many years, it is joyfully affirming as well. We have travelled some long, hard roads together with our horses and survived a lot of trials and triumphs on the journey. This award says it meant as much to my students as it did to me.”

Earlier in the evening, Landwehr introduced the CHA Clinician of the Year Award, saying, “The CHA Clinic Instructor of the Year Award goes to a CHA clinic staff person who has shown outstanding service to CHA by conducting meaningful clinics and influencing the careers of numerous instructors over many years.” Landwehr added that after all 25 of the CHA Clinics that Pat Leach of Burleson, TX, has hosted over the years since 2004, participants always marked their clinic evaluations as “Outstanding” with additional remarks of “Loved her,” “She rocks,” “Best ever,” “Treated me with kindness and truly affected me on a personal level,” “Amazing,” “She was one of the nicest people that I have ever met. She can put a positive spin on any situation,” and “Pat was monumental to me when it came to obtaining my CHA Certification.”

Leach has been teaching for the past 30 years and is currently a CHA Master Level Instructor, Clinic Staff, and one of the Region 8 Directors. Leach has been an active participant in the Arabian horse industry for 40 years. During that time, she captured three Arabian Horse Association National Top Tens, two Region 9 Championships, and a host of Regional Top Fives and other championships. She has shown in dressage at third level, western, saddle seat, side saddle, hunter/jumper, single pleasure driving, reining, and other disciplines. She is currently focused on learning driving and completed her first marathon recently. In addition, she participates in events through the American Competitive Trail Horse Association and Equine Trail Sports. Leach began riding consistently upon the

purchase of her first horse, a Half-Arabian gelding, right out of college. She currently owns Sa-Kim Farms and now travels to her students to teach them on their own horses. She has also taught at various boarding stables and at a Girl Scout camp in the past.

“I was absolutely and totally shocked and surprised,” said Leach about her award win. “I had no idea that I was even in consideration for it. I have worked with a lot of really good clinic staff through the years, and I’m totally honored that I would be considered for this award.”

For more information about the 2015 CHA International Conference, please visit [Facebook.com/CHAIInstructors](https://www.facebook.com/CHAIInstructors) and search hashtag #CHAIiCON on Facebook. For more information on the 2016 CHA International Conference, visit http://cha-ahse.org/store/pages/47/International_Conference.html.

CHA Instructors Change Lives Through Safe Experiences with Horses. The purpose of CHA is to promote excellence in safety and education for the benefit of the horse industry. CHA certifies instructors and trail guides, accredits equestrian facilities, publishes educational manuals, produces educational horsemanship DVDs and YouTube Safety shorts, and hosts regional and international conferences. For more information on the largest certifying body of riding instructors and barn managers in North America, Certified Horsemanship Association, please visit www.CHA-ahse.org or call 859-259-3399. To find a certified horseback riding instructor or accredited equine facility near you, visit www.CHAIInstructors.com.

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