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Certified Horsemanship Association Awards CHA Stone School Horse of the Year Award to Romeo from Fox Mask Basic Horsemanship

(October 2018) – Great school horses are the foundation of every horseback riding program, and that is why the Certified Horsemanship Association awards a year-end award to one great school horse every year. Romeo from Fox Mask Basic Horsemanship in Chandler, Arizona, was honored with the CHA Stone School Horse of the Year Award at the Awards Banquet at the CHA International Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, on September 30. He was chosen out of many exemplary nominees. Romeo’s likeness was recreated by the Peter Stone Company with a Stone Horse statue that was presented to his owner, Tammy Smith. Smith is a CHA Certified Instructor who owns Fox Mask Basic Horsemanship.

Romeo is a 28-year-old bay grade gelding with Navajo brands on him. Smith has owned him for the past 12 years. Romeo works with beginners to intermediate riders at Fox Mask. He has been used in hunter under saddle, jumping, western pleasure, barrel racing, side saddle, and bareback riding, and students love showing him in horse shows. In addition, he has been a therapy horse for riders with disabilities.

“The students are the ones who made this amazing horse win the lesson horse of the year,” said Smith. “They all have ridden him at some point and have just fallen in love with his fun loving spirit! It’s an honor to win this award for Romeo, the students, and the barn. Now we can say we have the barn that Romeo built.”

Romeo helps teach riders to be confident and to maintain correct body positioning. “He knows if the rider doesn’t have their heels down, or if the rider gets too forward, as he will stop until they correct themselves...and then he will continue,” said one nominee.

Romeo is patient with riders and even seems to know if a more advanced rider is aboard or if it is a new short stirrup beginner.

“He has always been a very special horse for every rider that comes to the barn—from novices to experienced riders,” said one nominee about Romeo. “He is the perfect blend of sugar and spice; he combines a gentle nature with a strong-willed attitude. This makes every rider who works with him grow stronger and more confident with their abilities in horseback riding. He is an excellent teacher to novices, giving them confidence while also helping them

to understand how communication with their horse is essential. After riding him, there is almost a magnetic pull to come back and ride him again. He brings so many such an overwhelming amount of joy, on and off the saddle.”

The CHA Stone School Horse of the Year Program honors the best of the school horses who are part of CHA member programs. The longtime sponsor of the program, Stone Horses, creates “model horses for real horse people.” Each equine finalist receives a plaque from CHA and were also honored at the Awards Banquet. The top five finalists included:

- Coco from Rockin’ L&D Ranch in Escondido, CA
- Doc’s Holly Smoke from CRK Training Stable in Yorba Linda, CA
- Maybe Hope from Stafford Hills Equitation in West Linn, OR
- Romeo from Fox Mask Horsemanship in Chandler, AZ
- Sierra Bambi in Santa Rosa, CA

To see the past CHA Stone School Horses of the Year visit http://cha-ahse.org/store/pages/50/Award_Winners.html

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