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For More Information and Photos
Contact: Christy Landwehr
720-857-9550 or clandwehr@CHA-ahse.org

Certified Horsemanship Association Honors 2017 CHA Award Winners at the CHA International Conference 50th Anniversary Celebration

(November 2017) – Every year the Certified Horsemanship Association's International Conference ends with a grand finale with the Awards Banquet on Saturday night, and the 50th Anniversary Celebration in Lexington, Kentucky, was a night to remember. The banquet was held on October 28, 2017, at the Marriott Griffin Gate Resort and Spa. CHA would like to recognize several of its award winners for 2017: **CHA Volunteer of the Year—Jill Montgomery** of Pueblo West, Colorado; **CHA Partner in Safety — Houghton College** in Houghton, New York; and **CHA Distinguished Service Award—Ward Stutz** of Amarillo, Texas.

Every year since 1996, CHA has given the **CHA Volunteer of the Year Award** to honor the volunteer that has worked hard to help enhance the association and who helps CHA accomplish its mission of educating people about safety with horses. Jill Montgomery is a previous CHA Board of Directors member, and she served on the Research and Development Committee during the rewrite of two of CHA's educational horsemanship manuals—*Standards for Equestrian Programs* and *The Equine Professional Manual—The Art of Teaching Riding*. She is currently a volunteer regional director for Region 9 and has put on several successful CHA regional conferences. Montgomery has been a CHA member for 11 years and is a CHA Certified Instructor, an Equine Facility Manager Clinician, and a CHA Site Visitor.

"I was so surprised and honored to be given this beautiful award," said Montgomery. "I love CHA's mission and the wonderful, talented people who work to support it. It is my pleasure and privilege to work on behalf of CHA to change lives through safe experiences with horses."

Montgomery was also awarded the 2017 Van Ness Award from the American Horse Council for her service to the horse community in Colorado. She has served on the boards of various organizations, such as the Colorado Horse Council, the Animal Welfare Council, and she helped found the Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance and the Pueblo West Horsemen's Association. Her experience spans activities as diverse as managing the U.S. Army's Dude

Ranch to serving as Executive Director of the American Youth Horse Council. Montgomery is a published author, an expert witness, and an equine welfare advocate.

“She has dedicated more than 31 years of her professional life to the horse industry and has had a great influence on keeping equine activities accessible and enjoyable for everyone,” says Christy Landwehr CHA’s CEO. “She has demonstrated a high level of leadership, and she has extensive experience with work on horse industry issues.”

The **CHA Partner in Safety Award** recognizes an outstanding individual or organization that has helped not only the equine industry and CHA, but the community at-large by promoting safety and awareness. The Equestrian Studies Program at Houghton College, which is a liberal arts institution in the context of a relevant Christian community, is known for academic excellence, professionalism, and experiential learning as it empowers its students to enrich the world. In 2016, this CHA Program Member was listed as one of the 20 Most Amazing College Equestrian Centers in the Country by Best Value Schools alongside major universities such as Michigan State, Penn State, Stanford, and the University of Kentucky. The program prepares students to ride, teach, and train using the principles of classic dressage in five disciplines—dressage, hunter/jumper, eventing, Western, and trail riding.

This rural setting provides an ideal training ground for students to learn and train under CHA Certified professors and FEI level clinicians. Each year, the college hosts 10-12 public events at the Equestrian Center, including classes, competitions, and clinics. During the summer months, the center conducts a regularly sold-out, multi-week equestrian camp and also hosts a number of U.S. Equestrian-recognized dressage competitions. Houghton College’s Equestrian Studies program has been a part of CHA since 1996 and has hosted 44 CHA Standard English/Western, Equine Facility Manager, and CHA College/University Clinics, as well as numerous CHA regional conferences. The college recently broke ground on a 36,400-square foot indoor equestrian arena, which should be completed in time for the 2018-2019 academic year thanks to an anonymous gift of \$2.4 million. Houghton College’s Larissa Strappello Ries, Instructor of Equestrian Studies and the Equestrian Facility Manager, accepted the CHA award on behalf of Houghton College.

“It was a complete surprise and a huge honor to receive the Partner in Safety Award from CHA,” said Ries. “We were honored to receive it. It means a lot to be seen as an equine educational facility that promotes safety and one that partners with CHA by hosting many of their certification clinics. Our desire is to help those who come into our barn learn how to safely handle horses and how to develop a partnership with the horses they work with.

Whether students are learning how to scoop manure or ride a half pass, our goal is to provide each student a safe educational environment that will push them to do their best and learn all that they can!”

Jo-Anne Young, the Equestrian Program Director and Assistant Professor of Physical Education, also attended the awards banquet on behalf of Houghton College. "Houghton College is honored and pleased to continue working with CHA in preparing the next generation of riders and instructors for excellence with safety," said Young. "Incorporating CHA over the last 31 years into Houghton College's courses in equestrian pedagogy and equine facility management has allowed the Houghton students to earn certifications that lend international validity to their education and teaches them to be well-prepared to meet and exceed industry standards. This lovely award confirms that we are on the right track!"

The **Distinguished Service Award** is a lifetime achievement award for an individual who has gone above and beyond through the years to promote and uphold the mission of CHA. Ward Stutz has served on the CHA Board as a Director, as CHA President, and as a Past President, he has worked hard to help other breed and discipline associations in the industry know what CHA is all about. He has been a CHA member since 2009 and served on the CHA Board of Directors from 2009 until last year.

“Riding instructors are the life blood of the horse industry,” said Stutz. “By ensuring a safe and fun experience, instructors open the door for people to have a lifetime relationship with horses. It is an honor to be able to contribute to CHA’s efforts, an organization with such a worthy cause.”

Stutz is the current Director of Breed Integrity, Animal Welfare, and Education at the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA). He has been responsible for the AQHA’s animal welfare initiatives and public policy initiatives. He has also served on the AQHA Professional Horsemen’s Council, the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, the American Welfare Council, and as president of the American Youth Horse Council. Stutz received his Bachelor of Science from Colorado State University in agriculture industries management and a Master of Science from Oklahoma State University in animal science. He has been involved with training, judging, showing, racing, packing, and teaching.

“He has certainly represented CHA well, but he has also been a strong advocate for the horse and our industry as a whole,” said Bob Coleman of the University of Kentucky and current CHA Vice President of New Initiatives. “While it is easy to consider his actions just doing his job, I feel that he has done his job and more. In regards to CHA, he has actually put the organization and what it does ahead of his own job. And he gave CHA it’s Why!”

For a complete list of past award winners, visit http://cha-ahse.org/store/pages/50/Award_Winners.html. For more information about the 2017 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.CHAINstructors.com.

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