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## **Certified Horsemanship Association Honors 2017 CHA Instructor of the Year and Clinic Instructor of the Year at the CHA International Conference**

*(November 2017)* – Every year the Certified Horsemanship Association’s International Conference honors two of its instructors with the CHA Instructor of the Year and the CHA Clinic Instructor of the Year at the Awards Banquet at the CHA International Conference. This year, two special women were honored on Saturday night at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in Lexington, Kentucky, on October 28, 2017, at the Marriott Griffin Gate Resort and Spa. CHA recognized **Jenn Gay** of Pinckney, Michigan, as **CHA Instructor of the Year** and **Shellie Hensley** of Macksburg, Iowa, as **CHA Clinic Instructor of the Year**.

Each year CHA recognizes an outstanding individual that has been nominated by their students to receive recognition for what they do best – teach people to ride! CHA Certified Instructor Jenn Gay’s love of Girl Scouts started in early childhood, and now she has created an amazing place for Girl Scouts of all ages to come and learn about horses at her Heavenly Horse Stables. Gay started riding at age nine, volunteering at age 12, and teaching beginners by age 17. She is active with various Girl Scout troops and currently serves as the Outdoor Education Specialist for the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan after serving as their Equestrian Director and other positions there for almost 12 years. Her students are able to earn badges and work on volunteer projects, while troop leaders in southeastern Michigan know that Heavenly Horse Stables is the place to go for equestrian education. Gay has been a CHA Certified Instructor since 2005 in English and Western disciplines, and she currently serves as the Michigan representative for CHA’s Region 4.

Gay said that being named the CHA Instructor of the Year was empowering. “I had a calling for teaching others, and as I heard Christy Landwehr, CHA’s CEO, read quotes about the awardee I had thought to myself, ‘I hope my students feel that way about me,’ and I found out that it is exactly how they feel!” said Gay. “This award is truly a symbol of hard work and dedication to my mission of teaching people today to make a better world for horses tomorrow. I am now eager to work on my goal of becoming a CHA Clinic Instructor and continue to welcome newcomers to the horse industry.”

“I see her students being calm and focused as well,” said one of Gay’s students. “They really strive to be ‘just like her.’ She is a friendly, optimistic person whose enthusiasm rubs off on

those around her. Her lessons leave an ever-lasting impact on her students. She has taught me the importance of consistency and timing when working with horses. Her encouraging nature makes the most nervous of riders feel empowered and able to take on the new challenges she sets before them. Her bubbly fun personality and her commitment to teaching everyone something new helps bring riders back. Not only is she teaching people horsemanship and riding, she has her riders think their processes through, 'Plan your ride, ride your plan.'

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. In addition to being a CHA Clinic Instructor, Shellie Hensley is also CHA Certified at Level 3 for riders with disabilities, a CHA Site Visitor, a Life CHA member, and has been a member since 1994. She has served on the CHA Board of Directors several times. Hensley started H Mill Iron Horsemanship with her husband, Randy. She was previously the Innisfree Equestrian Center as the Equestrian Director, Pegasus Farm Therapeutic Equestrian Center in Ohio as an instructor, and Camp Y-Noah as the Equestrian Director and an Assistant Equestrian Director. This Grass Lake, MI, native is a graduate of Murray State University. She currently lives with her husband and the horses of H Mill Iron in Macksburg, IA.

Hensley said that as she listened to the comments being read about the winner at the awards banquet, she wondered who it was so she could work with her. It finally hit her when they mentioned one of her quotes from her Facebook page. "Cue the tears!" said Hensley, adding that she was so surprised she doesn't remember what she said during her short acceptance speech. "Why the strong reaction? CHA is a membership driven organization, and our members are the backbone and boots in the dirt, living the CHA WHY statement. We are all working to move CHA forward in the equine industry and inspire others toward safe horsemanship, and that includes the importance of certification. To be named Clinic Instructor of the Year is a humbling experience, and I am so incredibly blessed to be able to do what I do in life and have the time and freedom to serve an organization I believe in so deeply."

Barbara Klatt, another CHA Clinician shared more about Hensley. "She has a quote on her Facebook page, 'I am an ordinary woman living an extraordinary life.' There is nothing ordinary about her. I believe she is an extraordinary woman bringing her unique style and grace into everyone's life who has the opportunity to interact with her. She is passionate in how she lives every part of her life. She cares deeply about her horses, her students, her

family, and her friends. This comes through in every aspect of how she conducts herself as a CHA Clinic Instructor.”

For a complete list of this year and past award winners, visit [http://cha-ahse.org/store/pages/50/Award\\_Winners.html](http://cha-ahse.org/store/pages/50/Award_Winners.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](http://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](http://www.CHAINstructors.com).*

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