

# CERTIFIED *gold*

By Sarah Evers Conrad

The Arabian Horse Association has partnered with a variety of companies within the horse industry who provide expanded opportunities for participants in Arabian horse activities. One of those partners has some unique and beneficial opportunities for AHA members, especially those who have a business or would like additional educational opportunities and materials. The Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) is the largest certifying organization in North America, and at its core, it exists to help promote excellence in safety and education for the benefit of the horse industry.

## CHA's Leading Programs

CHA's well-known certification programs are one of the biggest benefits of CHA membership. They have been modified and refined over the organization's 50-year history to become the standard for certification within the horse industry. With more than 30,000 certified instructors to date, it's no wonder that various organizations are seeing the benefits of partnering with this growing non-profit association.

CHA offers the Standard Instructor Certification for individuals that teach English and/or Western riding at various levels of competency. In addition, certification opportunities are offered for Trail, packing, and day-ride trail guides; seasonal equestrian staff at equine facilities; Vaulting coaches; Drivers and Driving instructors; and instructors of riders with disabilities.

Another certification that can benefit Arabian equestrian facilities is the Equine Facility Manager Certification. This 20-hour certification clinic evaluates staff from equine facilities on their skills and knowledge of equine facility management. This is beneficial for boarding barns, breeding

## The Certified Horsemanship Association Offers Opportunities & Education to AHA Members

*Photos courtesy of Certified Horsemanship Association*



operations, lesson barns, show barns, and others, as it helps showcase to clients the professionalism and knowledge of the staff at that facility.

Christy Landwehr of Aurora, Colo., CHA's Chief Executive Officer, emphasizes the purpose of CHA. "Our educational membership association certifies equine professionals and accredits equine facilities," said Landwehr. "Most of our instructors work with the first-time rider and horse owner to make sure that they have a safe and fun experience and want to stay involved in the horse industry for a long time."

Bob Coleman, with the University of Kentucky and CHA's Vice President of New Initiatives, says that the industry is shifting toward clients searching for a verifiable certification. "This is the one certifying body that's been at it the longest and has the most rigorous process," said Coleman about CHA.

Coleman adds that CHA certification offers validation of the individual's knowledge and ability and demonstrates to current and potential customers that the certified instructor has met well-respected industry standards and been evaluated by an independent organization. He compared it to the well-known "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval." The added credibility and the ability to stand out from competitors in the area can lead to clients feeling comfortable in their decisions to work with that individual or facility.

In addition to certification, facilities can also become Site Accredited through CHA. This program is based on CHA's well-respected and industry-accepted Standards for Equestrian Programs manual and involves trained site accreditors visiting an equine facility to ensure that they meet all of the CHA safety standards. "It adds one more piece of additional credibility that somebody has come and looked at your processes and how you care for your

horses and how you run your business,” said Coleman, adding that this independent verification also helps when clients are choosing equine facilities.

Landwehr says that many individuals will become certified due to the discounts on professional liability insurance policies, while equine facilities will become CHA Site Accredited for discounts on insurance that covers an equestrian property. This makes for a great benefit for AHA Discovery Farms and Learn-to-Ride Barns. Most insurance carriers will offer these discounts because they are aware of the CHA program, and if they aren’t aware, then CHA provides materials to the companies to help raise awareness so that members can receive insurance discounts.

For people seeking a riding instructor or an accredited facility, CHA’s online database, [www.CHAinstructors.com](http://www.CHAinstructors.com), is the perfect resource since it has a searchable directory for people to search by word, an instructor’s name, a facility’s name, or by location.

For those who don’t want to become certified or site accredited, there are still a variety of membership benefits for individuals and businesses who join CHA.

### CHA’s Educational Opportunities

CHA’s biggest educational opportunities are their live events, which include great school horses that attendees get to ride in sessions with presenters at the CHA International Conference, regional conferences, and skills clinics. The 2017 CHA International Conference was extra-special for the organization as it celebrated its Golden Anniversary. “I was thrilled about the 50th Anniversary,” said Landwehr. “I thought we recognized and commended our past, thanked those helping us now, and showed that we are excited about our future initiatives.”

Coleman noted the collegiality between members at the event, especially between experienced members and new members. “I think any time CHA people get together, the energy and excitement of what they do makes for a really cool environment to be in,” said Coleman. “I think it’s exciting that we can share readily with each other and everybody looks at everybody there as a great source of information. It’s a unique group that way.”



**Above —**  
Domino’s Crescent Moon aka “Domino” — 2006 Stone CHA School Horse of the Year from Eagle Creek Equestrian Center in Griffin, Ga.



**Below —**  
Sirdar Sahib “Sir Dar” — 2015 Stone CHA School Horse of the Year, from Experience Equus in Aledo, Texas.



The 2018 CHA International Conference will be held September 27-30 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. and will feature mounted workshops for participants, lessons from Master-level certified instructors, top veterinarians, horse trainers, and other experts from the equine industry. For more information, please visit [www.CHAINstructors.com/conference](http://www.CHAINstructors.com/conference).

In addition to the well-rounded educational program, the conference also hosts the CHA Awards Banquet, which honors the CHA Instructor, Clinic Instructor, Volunteer, Partner in Safety, and School Horse of the Year. Two Arabians have made their marks as CHA School Horses of the Year, sponsored by Stone Horses. One was Purebred Arabian Sirdar Sahib, who is owned by Darla Walker-Ryder and Experience Equus of Aledo, Texas, and the other was Domino's Crescent Moon, who is owned by Jessica Beohm, and from Eagle Creek Equestrian Center in Griffin, Ga.

CHA also offers certification for students at colleges and universities that offer existing equine studies curriculums. This has been a growing program for CHA in the past few years, so much so that CHA has received a grant from the Dew Foundation. It will help provide reimbursement travel



**Above —** Current CHA President Beth Powers speaking at the 50th Anniversary International Conference.

**Below —** Mounted workshops for participants and lessons from Master-level certified instructors and other professionals are held at the CHA International Conferences.

funds to designated CHA members who will visit schools not currently partnered with CHA to share all that the association has to offer in regards to educational manuals, DVDs, and certification clinics and conferences.

CHA also offers educational materials to both members and non-members through their webinars, their monthly radio show with the Horse Radio Network's "Horses in the Morning," the CHA blog, a monthly email, and free educational YouTube videos on horsemanship and horse care, some of which feature Arabians.

In addition, CHA produces educational DVDs and publishes a variety of educational manuals. Coleman said the release of "The Equine Professional Manual — The Art of Teaching Riding" was an enormous accomplishment for CHA. The manual was honored with second place in the Equine-Related Nonfiction Book category at the 2017 American Horse Publications Awards, which are "the industry standard" for publication awards within the horse industry. CHA's educational materials can be purchased online at [www.CHA.horse/store/categories](http://www.CHA.horse/store/categories).

### Upcoming CHA Initiatives

CHA is excited to have numerous programs in development and new ones starting in 2018. Each CHA Region will kick off its own awards program by naming a Volunteer, Instructor, and School Horse of the Year. Each of these winners will then vie for the international award at the 2018 CHA International Conference.

One of the biggest challenges instructors face is finding well-trained school horses to



use in their programs. Arabian horse owners who have such horses may now have an outlet to either sell, donate, or lease horses to CHA lesson programs in their area.

In addition, a pilot program that CHA is kicking off, thanks to a grant from the Watershed Group, which funds the Right Horse Initiative, will also help CHA instructors source school horses. Beginning with Region 9 — Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska — CHA and the Right Horse Initiative will be actively trying to rehome horses in transition. Harmony Equine Center in Colorado will serve as the adoption agency that will first receive the horses before they are sent to Colorado State University (CSU) for students handle and train. CSU students will spend a semester or two working with the horses before they are put up for adoption. Then CHA members can apply to adopt them for \$500. The grant will provide the funds needed to ship these horses to their new homes. It is a win-win for all involved, especially the horses.

Every year, CHA can be found at a variety

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of equine events throughout the country. Another pilot program is the new CHA Speakers Bureau, which has CHA members available to speak at a variety of events on various topics, including risk management in a riding program, horse behavior, teaching techniques for group riding lessons, and other topics. That program got started in 2017, and anyone wishing to inquire about having a speaker at an AHA event can email [office@CHAinstructors.com](mailto:office@CHAinstructors.com).

CHA encourages AHA members to become more involved with its programs and to take advantage of all the educational materials and experiences CHA offers. To learn more about the Certified Horsemanship Association and/or to sign up for monthly updates on CHA programs and initiatives, please visit [www.CHA.horse](http://www.CHA.horse). 🐾

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