

Congrats to our first inductees into the



LAURA SMITH **Founder**



Laura Smith's love of horses began long before anyone could imagine the impact she would one day make. Her parents finally bought her a horse in the 5th grade, igniting a lifelong passion and a deep appreciation for the joy, responsibility, and life lessons horses bring to a child.

That early spark carried her to the University of Findlay, where she majored in Equestrian Studies. While there, she met her husband, Mark, and together they built a life and partnership centered on hard work, dedication, and Paint Horses. Mark and Laura created their business in Pennsylvania and focused on training and breeding exceptional paint horses. They raised and trained multiple world champions and countless honor roll title winners.

In 2004 Mark and Laura relocated to Findlay, Ohio, where Mark joined their alma mater to help teach the next generation of equestrians. Laura continued to follow her passion for the impact horses can have on people's lives, dedicating her time to working with equestrians with disabilities.

In 2016, alongside her longtime friends Ric Wietzel and Debbie Arnold, the concept of Youth Equestrian Development Association (YEDA) was formed. This created the perfect opportunity for Laura to pour her years of experience into building a pathway for youth to ride and show horses, without the barrier of owning or leasing. Today, as CEO of YEDA, Laura leads with vision, energy, and an unwavering commitment to the equestrian community. She takes great pride in supporting both current horse professionals and the next generation of riders. What she cherishes most, however, are the people, the relationships she has built across the country, the new faces she meets at every event, and the countless stories she hears about how YEDA has impacted lives in meaningful and lasting ways.

While her equestrian legacy is meaningful, her greatest accomplishment is her family. She has been married for over 40 years and has raised 2 amazing daughters, Molly and Brandy. The girls have blessed her with beautiful grandchildren. The entire family is very close-knit, and all contribute to the family traditions of love, support, hard work, and horses.

DEBBIE ARNOLD

Founder



As a 10 year old little girl, Debbie met a neighbor girl who had a pony named Champ. He pulled a cart. She immediately fell in love with horses. As a determined little girl, she contracted with the old man down the road to rent her a stall for \$3 a month. Then with lots of tears, her parents (not being horse people at all) caved in and bought her her first horse for \$200. Her life forever changed which now included horses.

Debbie and her husband started Arnold Show Horses and have been training and showing Quarter Horses and Paints and coaching riders of all ages to top honors for over 40 years. She liked showing but more so loved teaching and seeing her riders become successful horsemen and people. Both in and out of the show ring. Their success was and still is her success..

In 2008, she and her husband were asked to judge an IEA youth team riding show. She fell in love with the concept. So in 2011, she started Arnold Equestrian Team. It's through this that she met Laura Smith and Ric Weitzel. Their first meeting to start YEDA was in Oct, 2015 in her kitchen coming up with the name. And now as partners and friends YEDA is an avenue and a grassroots organization for little girls and boys (big ones too), just like she was, to be able to be around horses. To learn to ride and show. To join the equine industry. The industry she loves. Above all, Debbie is a devoted wife and mother of 2 children and 2 fiesty grandchildren. They are the love of her life. With the celebration of YEDA for 10 years she wants to.... thank the coaches, parents, riders, and amazing staff for all their support and belief in this program. She is excited about the future of YEDA. But most importantly, she wants to give glory to God for all he has done and his amazing plan.

RIC WEITZEL

Founder



Ric Weitzel's lifelong connection to horses began at an early age, where what started as a passion quickly grew into a career dedicated to teaching, training, and developing riders of all levels. Over more than 50 years in the equine industry and two decades coaching, Ric has built a reputation as a respected instructor, trainer, and mentor, working with riders from their first time in the saddle through national-level competition. As the owner and operator of Equine Differences, he has created a program centered on accessibility, education, and opportunity, helping riders succeed without the traditional barriers of horse ownership.

Ric's impact extends beyond the barn through his years of involvement with collegiate equestrian sport, including his time as head coach at Oberlin College and his service as an IHSA director. Through this work, he developed a deep understanding of the value of catch-riding formats and the importance of creating fair, competitive opportunities for riders regardless of background.

Recognizing a significant gap at the youth level, Ric co-founded the Youth Equestrian Development Association to introduce that same accessibility and structure to Western riders. What began as a grassroots effort has grown into a national organization that has opened doors for thousands of young equestrians, many of whom are new to the horse industry, by providing education, competition, and scholarship opportunities.

Today, Ric remains committed to growing the sport from the ground up, ensuring that future generations have a clear, accessible path into the equine industry and the opportunity to succeed within it.

ROSE STAYER-RUFFNER

Coach



Rose Stayer-Ruffner is a YEDA coach of six years located in Western New York. Her team, Winning Edge, are youth with a strong focus on horsemanship who maintain a high level of horse stewardship. Rose also coaches the Western Team for Alfred State College, and riders and teams in both YEDA and IHSA have earned numerous High-point Awards and Nationals wins and Top Ten placings. In addition to coaching, she has worked as a school counselor in the Allegany-Limestone school district for 24 years, thus her commitment to her riders stems from a deep professional background of helping students to prepare for the world—both in the classroom and the barn.

Rose's goals for her students run deeper than ribbons. Her students' time is focused on understanding and communicating with the horse. Her proudest moments are when a rider is present with the horse, setting aside outside distractions, and riding in a graceful partnership. She models high standards for professionalism and integrity and students learn to carry them forward for themselves and others. Rose encourages students to share their love of the horse and her team often gives back to the community through honoring Veterans, joining Alzheimer's Awareness walks and hosting benefits for families in need.

Rose has deep roots in the equine industry, having grown up showing on the AQHA circuit achieving many AQHA All-Around Youth Awards, Superior and Register of Merit Awards, and ESQHA Youth Championships. A catalyst in her return to the sport was moving back to the 200-year-old family homestead and filling the barn with horses once again. She contributes her successes to her parents, strong family ties, and her mentor Harry Hurd who encouraged her to coach and shares decades of knowledge. She feels blessed to have the opportunity to work with wonderful students and parents.

LISA MULFORD-CAMPBELL

Coach



Dr. Lisa Mulford-Campbell is the head coach of the Southern Ohio Equestrian Team (SOET). Lisa and her father, Denny Mulford, started the team in 2017 as a tribute to her mother, Sue Mulford, who lost her battle with cancer in 2016. Sue was an avid horsewoman and retired educator, so it seemed like the perfect way to honor her memory. Over the years, SOET has been extremely successful in regular season and post-season competition. In addition to individual riders' outstanding accomplishments, the Junior High team was named National Champions in 2019 & 2021, and Reserve National Champions in 2025. As a long time educator herself, Lisa is driven by a belief in the potential of every individual rider. She strives to inspire growth, build confidence, and create opportunities that empower riders to succeed at all levels.

As much as Lisa enjoys coaching and the connection with each rider and family, there was a time near the end of the Covid years that she considered slowing down and exploring ways to slowly transition her riders to other teams. After her husband's unexpected death and her own difficult battle with cancer, the long evenings in the barn and weekends at shows through the winter months were challenging. Meeting Chip Kugler in 2024 changed that significantly. With his support and investment in the team and all of the riders, the challenges became very manageable again. Early on in the YEDA journey, Lisa worked hard to obtain non-profit status for the team, making fundraising opportunities more available. This, along with her determination to maintain her Amateur status with AQHA and APHA, means that participation for all SOET members is very affordable, and limited to a reimbursement of expenses. At the 2026 Nationals 100% of all riders entries and coaches' travel are being covered from team funds. The only expense to families is their own travel. Lisa attributes her love of horses, interest in teaching, and dedication to the equine industry to her parents, Denny and Sue Mulford, and the example they both set for her and others throughout her life.

STACEY CREPS

Coach



Stacey Creps has had the privilege of being involved in YEDA since its beginning 10 years ago. Her role, like the YEDA organization, has been continuously evolving. She initially began as a parent, then progressed into providing horses for the program, and currently is the coach of DB Equestrian Team.

During these 10 years, she has been most excited to see the Equestrians with Disabilities classes being offered and witnessing the growth within those classes. Her profession, as a Pediatric Physical therapist for 30 years and specializing in Hippotherapy for 16 years, as well as coaching Congress champions in the EWD classes gave her the knowledge and passion to dive in and lend a hand so YEDA could confidently offer showing opportunities to all abilities of riders.

"I love that the founders chose to start a student-based organization that builds horsemanship skills, but also well-rounded students who are encouraged to learn about horse care, showing, teamwork, compassion, empathy, and hard work. These skills will carry them far in whatever they choose to do."

Stacey is the owner of Dusty Boots, an equine facility in Northwest Ohio. She welcomes riders of all ages and abilities for hippotherapy, riding lessons, multiple show teams and anything horse related that the community needs. Dusty Boots is also home to The Special Horseman Connection, a 501c3 that Stacey started in hopes to raise funds to award grants to individuals with special needs to participate in equine activities. Today, that organization is now fully run by a volunteer committee and awards grants to multiple EWD riders each year, allowing them to compete and use funds towards their equine activities.

Stacey enjoys riding and showing her own horses in the ranch horse events, but is striving to continue growing herself as a rider and starting to branch out into the reining events as well. Her favorite part of getting to do the job she has is watching her students meet their goals both in and out of the arena. She works hard to provide learning experiences that will spill over into everything her students choose to do to make a well-rounded individual.

JAY LANZER

Supporter



Jay Lanzer has been ringside for more than 40 years, quietly shaping generations of riders, volunteers, and shows through his steady presence, deep knowledge, and unmistakable love for the horse industry. Born and raised in Ohio, Jay still proudly calls the Buckeye State home, where his dedication to youth equestrian development has left a lasting imprint.

A respected 4-H Performance Against Standards (PAS) Judge, Jay is known for his fairness, clarity, and encouragement of young exhibitors. His commitment extends far beyond the judging booth—he has generously donated his time to countless benefit horse shows, always stepping up when the community needed him most. For the past 10 years, Jay has also served as a scribe for YEDA, playing an essential behind-the-scenes role in supporting judges and ensuring the integrity and smooth operation of competitions. His consistency and reliability have helped YEDA grow into the strong organization it is today.

Jay's life of service is not limited to the show ring. He is a proud United States Army veteran, carrying forward the values of discipline, service, and teamwork into every part of his life. When he is not judging, working, or volunteering at horse shows, Jay works full time for the NFL's Cleveland Browns, proving that his work ethic knows no off-season.

Above all, Jay is known as an exceptional husband and devoted father to five children, as well as a proud grandfather to six grandchildren. His legacy is one of commitment—to family, to community, and to the future of youth equestrian sports. Jay Lanzer's induction into the YEDA Hall of Fame is a well-earned honor, celebrating a lifetime of service, leadership, and heart.

GRANT MASTIN

Alumni



The equine industry has long been at the heart of Grant Mastin's journey—a journey defined by excellence, leadership, and a deep commitment to the future of the sport.

An accomplished competitor, Grant has earned multiple AQHA and NSBA World and Reserve World Championships, along with multiple Congress and Reserve Congress Championships. His success in the show pen is matched by his dedication to giving back to the industry that shaped him.

A native of Jackson, Ohio, Grant has been actively involved with the Southern Ohio Equestrian Team (SOET) and the Youth Equestrian Development Association (YEDA) since 2017. As a founding-era member of SOET, he competed from his freshman year through his graduation in 2022, qualifying for YEDA Nationals each year in Horsemanship and Reining. During that time, he earned National Championships in both Diamond Horsemanship and the prestigious Diamond Elite Horsemanship, in addition to multiple top-ten finishes.

Grant's leadership extends far beyond competition. As the inaugural recipient of the NSBA Youth of the Year award and a former AQHYA First Vice President, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to service and advocacy. He currently serves on the AQHA Public Policy Committee, where he works to advance and protect the interests of the equine industry.

A passionate ambassador for youth involvement, Grant has played a key role in promoting YEDA and expanding participation by introducing new riders to the organization. His ongoing efforts highlight a lasting commitment to mentoring, developing, and inspiring the next generation of equestrians.

TRAVIS

Horse



"LESSON HORSES ARE WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD"

Travis taught many riders, from babies to select!! Not just about riding, but about handling a horse with a bit of an old man attitude, a horse with character, with not the best God-given front legs but definitely with God Given heart and work ethic! He also loved letting riders learn about flying lead changes and his personal space.

Travis earned AQHA points in such classes as: western pleasure, showmanship, western riding and horsemanship. He came to us from Judd, Jennifer and Ally Paul to be a team horse and he had already helped young riders at their barn. Young riders such as Shelbe Jarrett, making her Grandmother's dream come true to see her show at the All American Youth Show and the Quarter Horse Congress! Then onto starting a little Ally Paul!

Travis earned several "Horse of the Day" awards in his time as a YEDA horse, from the Pearl division to the Diamond division. Travis even babysat some of the foals as they were weaned, here at Puthoff Performance Horses. I can't even begin to tell you how many lessons he gave here and at the many YEDA shows. He was treated to Thera Plate sessions, magna wave treatments, Chiropractor visits and all of the regular veterinarian visits right along with his pasture time. I have no doubt Travis would still be teaching our young riders if his front feet would have not gotten tired before he actually was ready. He has a special resting place in a pasture under a nice shade tree!

THANK YOU TRAVIS!!!
Tim and Lynne Puthoff
Puthoff Performance Horses

TJ Horse



It is a privilege to welcome Big Tejano, affectionately known as “TJ,” into the YEDA Hall of Fame. A 2013 double-registered AQHA and APHA gelding, TJ has become a cornerstone of the YEDA community, embodying the heart, versatility, and reliability that define a legendary draw.

A Proven Champion

Before stepping into the lesson arena, TJ proved his athleticism and grit in the high-stakes world of professional reining. With a super successful NRHA career under his belt, he brought a level of finesse and “broke-ness” to our program that is rare to find.

His journey to JD Show Horses was one of resilience. Arriving with a hind suspensory injury, TJ underwent a patient and thorough rehabilitation process. Once healed, he transitioned seamlessly into his new calling, proving that a true champion’s greatest strength is their heart.

The Ultimate YEDA Partner

Since joining the YEDA ranks, TJ has established himself as the ultimate “team player.” Whether he’s working with a nervous beginner or a seasoned varsity rider, he is the gold standard for what a lesson horse should be.

- Reliability: TJ is known for his unwavering work ethic; he simply does what is asked of him, every single time.
- Performance: He is a consistent “Horse of the Day” winner, a testament to his quality and the fair, competitive rides he provides for every student.
- Presence: With his flashy markings, TJ is as beautiful to watch as he is fun to ride.

Why He Belongs in the Hall of Fame

TJ’s impact goes far beyond the ribbons. He is a horse that gives riders confidence, teaching them the nuances of a well-trained reiner while always trying his hardest to please. He represents the bridge between a high-level performance career and the vital role of a schoolmaster.

Congratulations to TJ on his induction into the YEDA Hall of Fame—a well-deserved honor for a horse that truly gives his all to the sport.

JERL Horse



Jerl Be Nimble

Jerl is a 29 year old quarter horse. He has been doing YEDA since 2017. Jerl’s career prior to YEDA was in the reining world. When he retired, he was still in great shape, so his owner Buffy Fitting-Kornman reached out, as she still wanted him to have a job. He got a job at Circle M, and he has enjoyed his job as much as the kids have enjoyed learning from him. We will forever be grateful that Buffy reached out.

Jerl was not the kind of horse that enjoyed attention. Since becoming a YEDA team horse, he has certainly changed. He now loves the attention he gets from the YEDA riders. He is a favorite of the Circle M Equestrian team and many other YEDA riders. Jerl has carried many riders to wins in the all classes from the reining all the way down to the pearl and opal divisions. We will forever Cherish this amazing horse.