



Erin Featherstone with Sportsmanship Award winner Kylie Abrego, Nora Andrews and Board Member Kristen Guadagnino.



Geoff and Logan Allison with Humanitarian Award winner Harpur Schwartz and Sally Vita Allison.

Connecticut Horse Shows Association

CELEBRATES 79TH ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

SUBMITTED BY GEORGE JENSEN

“We wanted to let you know what a wonderful time my family had at the banquet Saturday night. This was our first time attending and we thought everything was great. Our daughter had such a wonderful time.” That’s what one of the attendees at the Banquet stated. “It was fun!” said another. “It was just plain fun!” They were among the 480 who attended the 79th Connecticut Horse Shows Association (CHSA) Annual Awards Banquet held on March 3 at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford, Conn.

This year a new prize, The Hal Vita, Sr. Humanitarian Award, was given by his family for those who strive for excellence in volunteering service to the equestrian world, schools and community. This perpetual award was presented to Harpur Schwartz for her outstanding contribution to the High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center.

Another award was the Skylinvue High Point Challenge Trophy, given to the horse or rider actually accumulating the most points over the show season. This year’s winner was Hobgoblin, owned by the mother-daughter team of Teri and Melissa Henry of Ellington, Conn. Riding out of Oak Meadow Farm in East Windsor, Conn.,

“Puck” acquired nearly 1,600 points in hunter, equitation and pleasure divisions over the 2011 show season.

For the second year, the Challenge of the Barn Baskets was a focal point as folks bought tickets to vote for the barn basket they most wanted. Once again, Sarah Weaver and the Chestnut Hill Show Stables won the award with the amazing basket of horse items, goodies and services including a huge rideable stuffed pony on wheels. Second place in the contest was Oak Meadow Farm with their theme of three baskets, one for horses, one for trainers and one for kids with all kinds of party foods (chips, candy, etc). All proceeds from the barn baskets, raffle, and auction items go to the scholarship fund.

A very delicious meal accompanied the presentation of ribbons and awards for more than 42 divisions. This was followed by dancing until midnight to the disco music of Joe “The Vaz.” Our thanks again to Chairman Deb Krawitz, and her Banquet Committee.

Harpur Schwartz wins Hal A. Vita, Sr. Humanitarian Award

SUBMITTED BY CHRISTEN SCARPA

This year CHSA accepted a new year-end award. The Hal Vita, Sr. Humanitarian

Award was donated by his family in his honor and is open to all CHSA members who achieve excellence in volunteer services in the community as well as the equestrian world. This year the winner of the award is Harpur Schwartz.

When Broadway, her little warmblood, began painfully foundering it opened up a new chapter in her life. After regaining his health he was retired to his new home at High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center so he would have a purpose. This began one of the most meaningful parts of her life—her connection with the renowned riding center. That was in 2008, she was in eighth grade, and she has been volunteering there ever since.

High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center in Old Lyme, Conn., offers a variety of therapeutic and educational programs that have proven the rhythm and movement of sitting and walking on a horse can improve the balance, strength and flexibility of a rider. This helps the rider mentally to communicate and form a bond with their horse, which gives them confidence, hope and pride, which can be life changing for them. Harpur is a volunteer horse leader. She even learned carriage driving so that she could give carriage rides to those unable to sit safely on a horse. She feels that horses are an autistic child’s perfect companion because they understand, react and listen without words.

In 1962, Hal Vita, Sr., opened the doors of Shallowbrook Equestrian Center where he touched the lives of hundreds of adults, children and families who came through those stable doors. He founded the Connecticut Valley Hunt Club and coached generations of riders, including his own children, to national and state equestrian

championships. Hal taught much more than the fundamentals of horsemanship; he instilled a lifetime of strength, courage and pride in each student who had the honor of riding with "Mr. Vita".

Ever since becoming a member of CHSA, Harpur has been a faithful volunteer. At the awards banquet, she has helped organize 70 excited young children waiting to receive their proper year-end ribbons and awards for the Parade of Champions. At every CHSA Finals she assisted in the secretary's booth and was a great asset, helping to organize, oversee, and clean up the VIP tent. She even finds time to present ribbons to the winners!

At such a young age, Harpur shows extraordinary charity and kindness. Humanitarianism can be described as an ethic of kindness, benevolence and sympathy extended universally and impartially to all human beings. Harpur gives 200% regardless of the return. She has integrity, is honest, truthful, responsible, and compassionate. She has saved, improved and enriched the lives of people and horses in her community and beyond. I am truly inspired by Harpur's passion and commitment.

Kylie Abrego Takes Home Good Sportsmanship Award

SUBMITTED BY NORA ANDREWS AND ERIN FEATHERSTONE

Our wonderful friend Kylie Abrego deserves this year's Sportsmanship of the Year Award because she always puts the horse first. Whenever there is a problem she does her best to help the horse. Even if Kylie is not competing she will always go to the show to help—from holding a crop to putting on some last touch ups of hoof oil—she is always willing.

At the shows whether she is participating or not, she always cheers us on and is never a poor sport and always congratulates people on their success. It is so contagious that all we can do back is give her our best of luck and always congratulate her, too.

No matter what the circumstance is she is always smiling, happy, and ready to help! If it's anything, I love spending time with Kylie. She constantly laughs and smiles. Even if she falls off during a show or misses a change she will come out of the ring smiling and always learns from her mistakes. I have never seen Kylie upset over not getting a ribbon.

Please take our word for it: Kylie Abrego is Sportsman of the Year. 🐾

