



CHA's School Horse of the Year, Sir Dar, owned by Darla Ryder, serves as an ambassador for the Arabian breed.

Discovering the Arabian Horse

BY JANET DE ACEVEDO MACDONALD

Over the past few years, the Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) has partnered with a variety of equine organizations, including breed organizations such as the American Quarter Horse Association. And in 2015, CHA was very excited to partner with the Arabian Horse Association (AHA), which is the official breed association and registry for Arabian, Half-Arabian, and Anglo-Arabian horses in the United States. AHA has more than 23,000 members and is headquartered in Aurora, CO.



Known for their beauty, intelligence, courage, endurance, and athleticism, today's Arabian is also popular due to its great ability to bond with people. Many people have their first introduction to Arabians through "The Black Stallion" series by Walter Farley or the related movies. There is a national initiative that started out as the Black Stallion Literacy Foundation, which is now the Horse Tales Literacy Project. It teaches young children to read using "The Black Stallion" books and real-life experiences with horses. Not just an author, Farley was also a genuine Arabian horse enthusiast who purchased all of his horses from the famous Al-Marah Arabians. Al-Marah offers tours and interactive events at their new location outside Orlando, FL, as a way to showcase the breed.

AHA has several ways that its members connect with those wanting to learn more about the Arabian horse, including their unique Discovery Farm® program that lets people visit nearby Arabian horse farms to connect with Arabian owners. Whether it is riding lessons,

educational clinics, or just going out to pet an Arabian horse and learn about the breed, there is something for everyone. For those looking to discover an Arabian horse for the first time, or get reacquainted with the breed, you can search online for an AHA Discovery Farm® near you at www.arabianhorses.org/discoveryfarms.

Cory Soltau, DVM, equine veterinarian and owner of Blackhawk Valley Arabians, has been involved with the Discovery Farm® program for decades. Located on just five acres in the Bay Area near Pleasanton, CA, the Blackhawk facility has been home to many national champions and champion-producing stock.

"When people come to visit, it's never a hard sell...just exposure to the Arabian horse," says Soltau. He asks guests about their first horse experience and what they know about the Arabian. During the casual visits, take-home materials from AHA support those conversations about what makes this breed special. To learn more, visit www.blackhawkvalleyarabians.com.

Mary Trowbridge of Trowbridge's Ltd., owns one of the oldest ongoing Arabian breeding and training farms in the country situated in Bridge-water on the southwestern edge of Connecticut, which started in 1968. In addition to being a longtime Discovery Farm® participant, she's involved in local, regional, and national aspects of the breed association. "As a Discovery Farm®, Trowbridge's does almost 100% outreach. We've been involved so long I think we may be a charter member," says Trowbridge.

Trowbridge's Ltd. hosts a variety of events during the year, but its hallmark event, now in its 22nd year, is the Christmas Open House for Arabian horse newbies in its surrounding community. Boasting 350+ attendees with 15 horses presented, every attending child goes home with a picture of them standing next to a horse. Trowbridge is also a participant in the Horse Tails Literacy Project, which serves the local school system's first graders. They have reached well over 400 children, according to Trowbridge. For more, visit <http://www.trowbridgesltd.com>.

In addition to AHA's initiatives, several CHA members act as ambassadors for the breed. One of those ambassadors is Debbie Holmes, who has been a therapeutic riding instructor with Horses with Heart in Chino Valley, AZ, since 2010. She has been an instructor and barn manager for Arizona State University's horse program. Holmes is a CHA Master and Clinic Instructor in Western, English, and Jumping; CHA Master Instructor for Riders with Disabilities and Clinic Instructor; CHA Assistant Regional Director for Region 10; PATH Registered Instructor; PATH Equine Specialist; and certified at Level One through the American Hippotherapy Association. "I've owned Arabians for years," says Holmes. "I have always found them to be level-headed, intelligent horses. In fact, one Arabian mare who died some years back...I don't know if I'll ever really replace her. She was a horse of a lifetime."

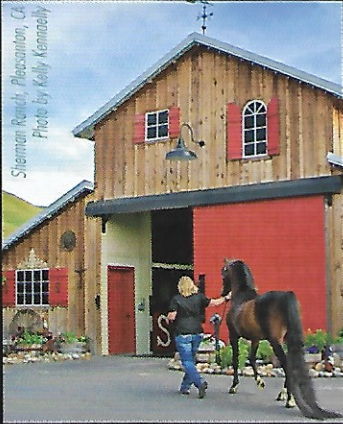
Holmes pointed out that Sir Dar, the horse that earned the CHA School Horse of the Year Award, is a 1990 purebred Arabian gelding. Sir Dar (registered as Sirdar Sahib) is owned by

Darla Walker Ryder, a CHA Master Instructor and Level 4 IRD Instructor, Clinic Staff, and CHA Lifetime Member in Aledo, TX.

These equine diplomats along with the AHA programs like Discovery Farm® will continue to educate about today's Arabian horse. If you own Arabian horses as a CHA member and want to share your passion for the Arabian breed, AHA encourages you to sign up to become a Discovery Farm® and share your knowledge about the Arabian horse. AHA provides materials (e.g., coloring books and horse markings and coat colors posters) to help educate and promote the breed to your farm visitors. Contact AHA's Marketing Communications Specialist Mikayla Boge by phone at 303-696-4569 or email mikayla.boge@arabianhorses.org with your questions. 🐾

Arabian horse owner Janet de Acevedo Macdonald is a travel writer and the award-winning executive producer for America's #1 travel radio show, "Rudy Maxa's World." In her free time, she shows as an amateur at AHA-recognized shows and is the co-owner of U.S. National Champion Legacys Renoir+.

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