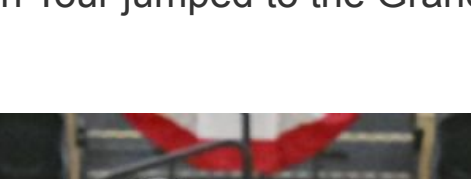


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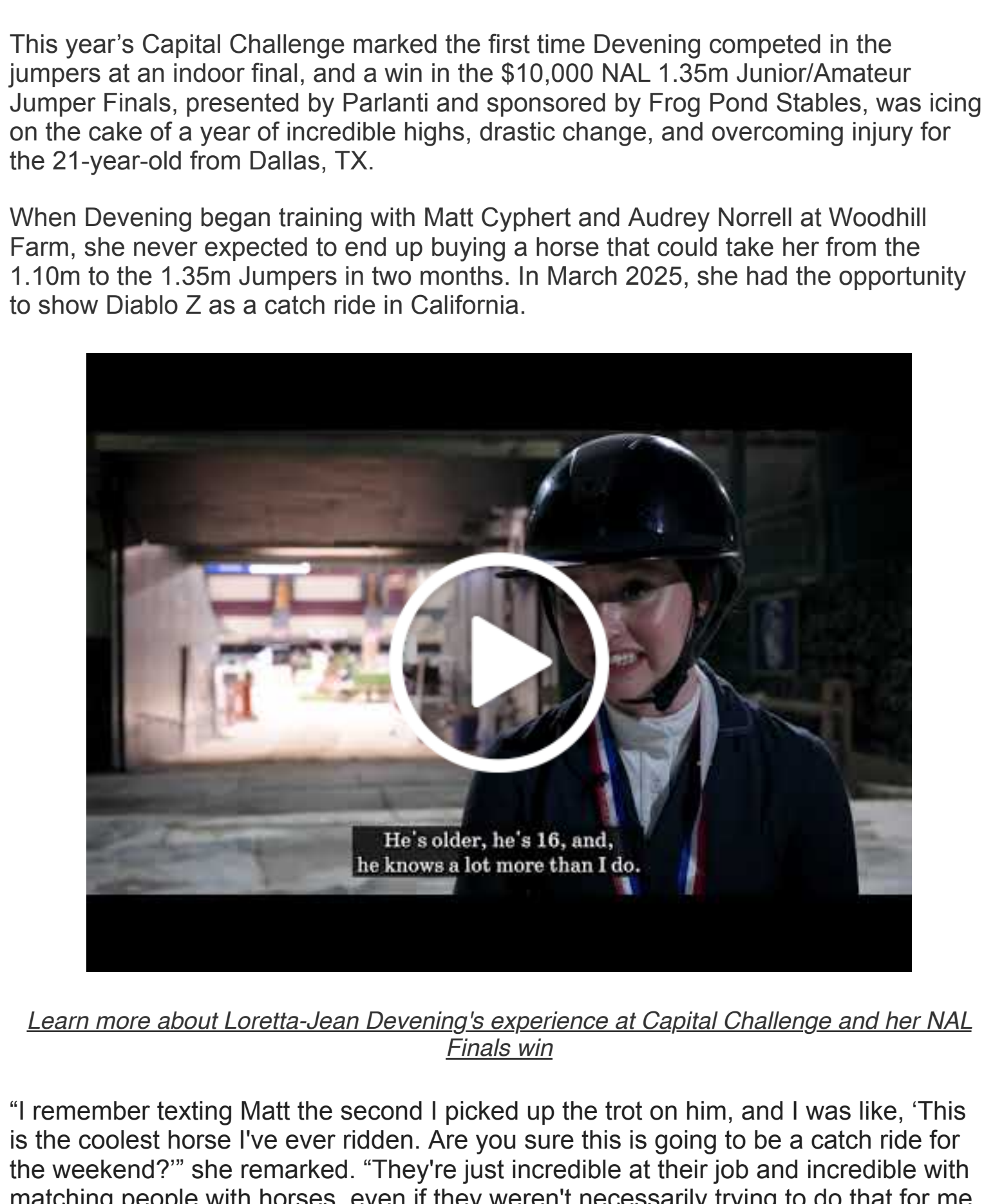
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For Immediate Release | October 4, 2025  
Contact: Jennifer Wood | [Jump Media](mailto:Jump Media) | [jwood@jumpmediallc.com](mailto:jwood@jumpmediallc.com)

## Devening Persists with Diablo Z for Memorable Win

Upper Marlboro, MD – Jumper competition at the 2025 Capital Challenge Horse Show wrapped up on Saturday, October 4, with two more North American League (NAL) competitions for junior and amateur riders. Loretta-Jean Devening and her own Diablo Z topped the \$10,000 NAL 1.35m Junior/Amateur Jumper Finals, presented by Parlanti, while Eloise Eisner rode Toy Soldier, owned by Abigail Gordon, to victory in the \$10,000 NAL 1.25m Junior/Amateur Jumper Final. Earlier in the day, Kenzie Smith and Charlotte Kelly's On Tour jumped to the Grand Pony Hunter Championship.

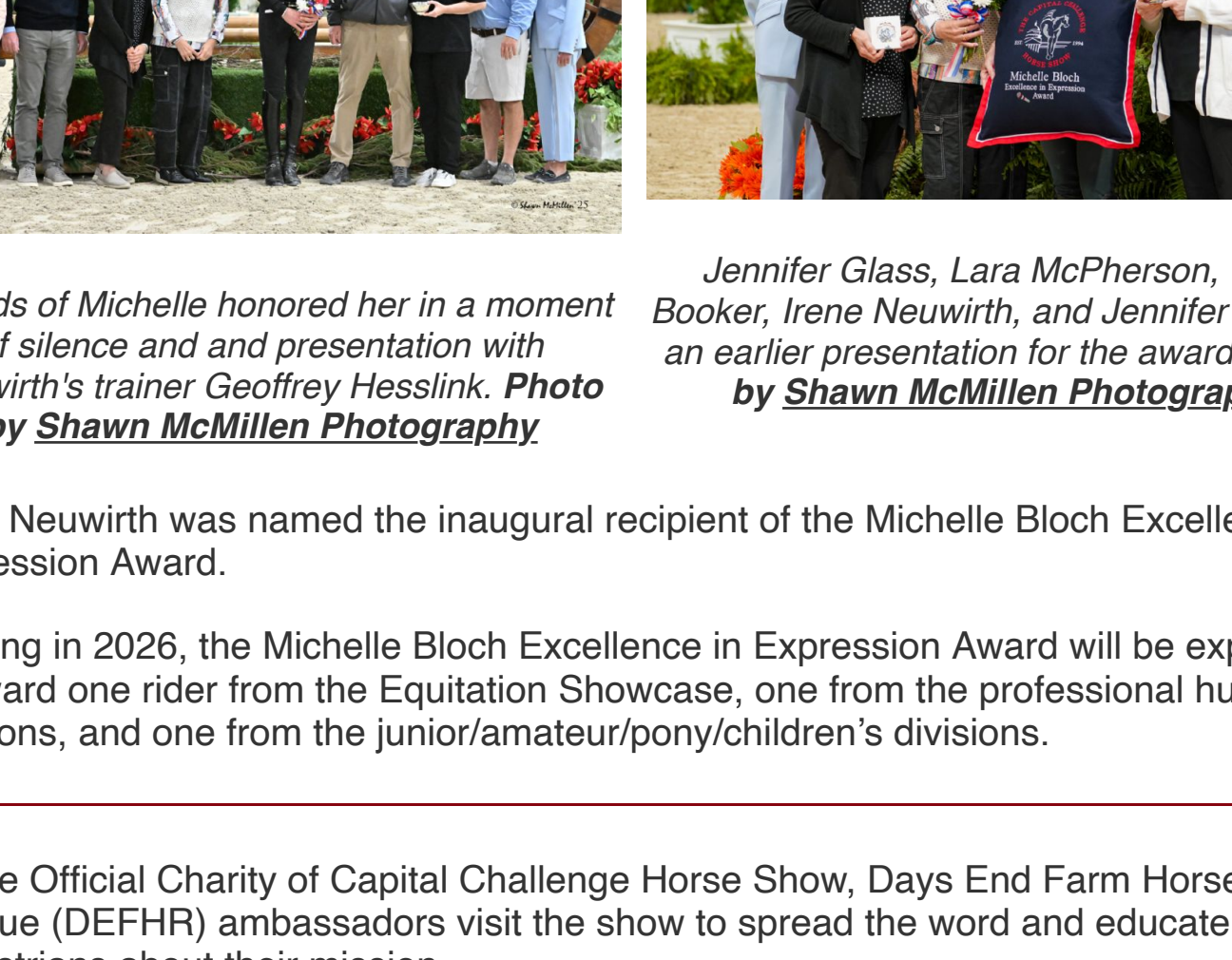


Loretta-Jean Devening had incredible highs, drastic change, and overcame injury leading up to her win at Capital Challenge with Diablo Z. Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

Four riders advanced to the jump-off in the \$10,000 NAL 1.35m Junior/Amateur Jumper Finals, presented by Parlanti, but finding the fastest route for the win was Loretta-Jean Devening riding her own Diablo Z in 36.248 seconds. All four were clear in the second round, so it came down to split seconds of time, as all were within 1.2 seconds of each other. Alice Goodwin rode her own Cocaine de Riverland to second place in 36.630 seconds, while Ria Ohtsu and her horse Jiminy Jumper were third in 36.930 seconds. Claire Mullally and Sonic Boom, owned by Judgment Farms LLC, were fourth with a time of 37.426 seconds.

This year's Capital Challenge marked the first time Devening competed in the jumpers at an indoor final, and a win in the \$10,000 NAL 1.35m Junior/Amateur Jumper Finals, presented by Parlanti and sponsored by Frog Pond Stables, was icing on the cake of a year of incredible highs, drastic change, and overcoming injury for the 21-year-old from Dallas, TX.

When Devening began training with Matt Cyphert and Audrey Norrell at Woodhill Farm, she never expected to end up buying a horse that could take her from the 1.10m to the 1.35m Jumpers in two months. In March 2025, she had the opportunity to show Diablo Z as a catch ride in California.



[Learn more about Loretta-Jean Devening's experience at Capital Challenge and her NAL Finals win](#)

"I remember texting Matt the second I picked up the trot on him, and I was like, 'This is the coolest horse I've ever ridden. Are you sure this is going to be a catch ride for the weekend?'" she remarked. "They're just incredible at their job and incredible with matching people with horses, even if they weren't necessarily trying to do that for me. They worked their magic."

One ride turned into three weeks and three championships in California before Devening made the decision to purchase him.

"He's so fiery, he always has so much game," she said of the 16-year-old Holsteiner gelding by Diarado. "He has the most heart of any horse I've ever ridden and is so willing and so wise. He comes out of the stall ready to perform every single day, and I think we get along really well because we're both kind of like Energizer bunnies. Whenever we go out there, what we always have to think about is kind of slowing things down, and we never really have to worry about being fast. I love how much he wants to win. It makes me fight even harder."

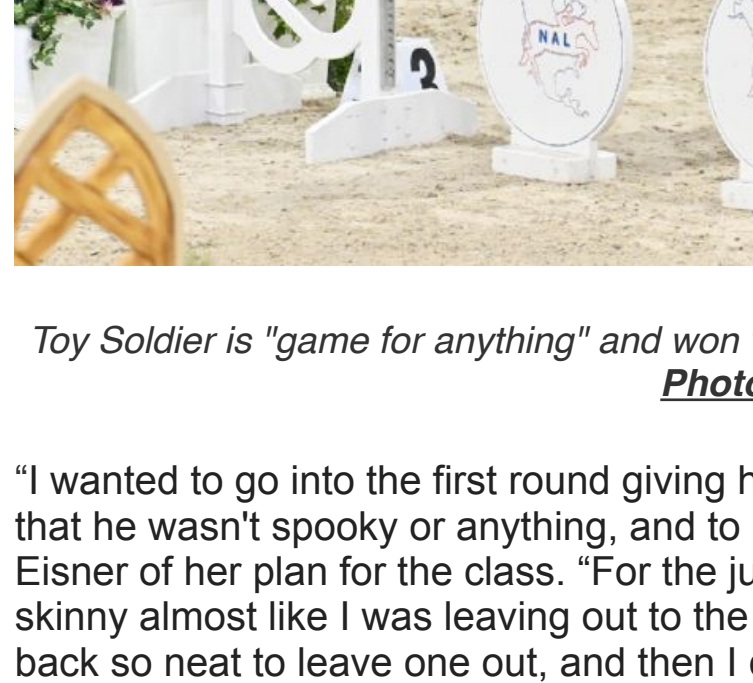
[Read More](#)

## Memorial Award and Fuzzy Ambassadors

Capital Challenge lost a dear friend, Michelle Bloch, this year. Michelle was a creative writer, designer, and photographer who loved promoting Capital Challenge and the sport to the public. She looked for special stories and unsung heroes in order to showcase those who should be recognized. She delighted in an interview that made her laugh, tear up, or think more deeply.

In her memory, the "Michelle Bloch Excellence in Expression Award" was created to award a rider who gives the best interview at the show and is a good spokesperson for the sport and the love of the horse.

The winner of the award was chosen by members of the Capital Challenge media team and members of the press at the show.



Friends of Michelle honored her in a moment of silence and presentation with Neuwirth's trainer Geoffrey Hesslink. Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography



Jennifer Glass, Lara McPherson, Tricia Booker, Irene Neuwirth, and Jennifer Wood in an earlier presentation for the award. Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

Irene Neuwirth was named the inaugural recipient of the Michelle Bloch Excellence in Expression Award.

Starting in 2026, the Michelle Bloch Excellence in Expression Award will be expanded to award one rider from the Equitation Showcase, one from the professional hunter divisions, and one from the junior/amateur/pony/children's divisions.

As the Official Charity of Capital Challenge Horse Show, Days End Farm Horse Rescue (DEFHR) ambassadors visit the show to spread the word and educate equestrians about their mission.

Established in 1989, DEFHR is a nationally renowned, benchmark 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to rehabilitating neglected equines and educating the community on equine welfare and advocacy. As a full-scale rescue and rehabilitation facility, DEFHR shelters an average of 130 equines a year, all funneled through animal protection authorities across Maryland, surrounding states, and even throughout the United States. DEFHR is a national leader in equine rehabilitation practices and equine cruelty education.



Rescue pony Zillow and DEFHR assistant trainer Leigha Schrader performed a liberty demonstration on Wednesday evening. Photo by Flaxen Mane Media



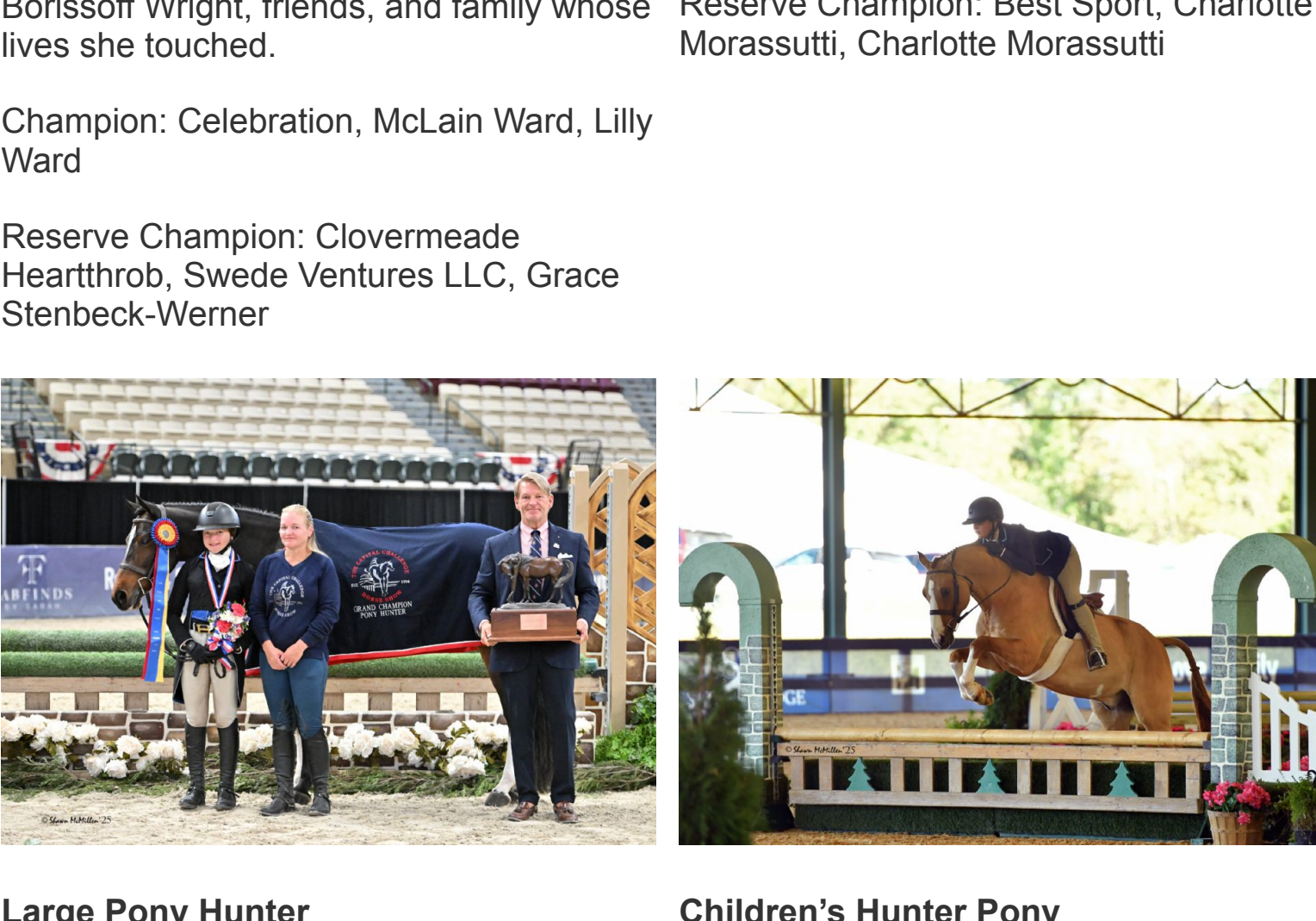
DEFHR ambassador Mini Mick Jagger was popular at Friday's ice cream social with DEFHR representatives. Photo by Flaxen Mane Media

[Learn More About DEFHR](#)

## Toy Soldier Marches to NAL 1.25m Final Win

Out of 31 entries in the \$10,000 NAL 1.25m Junior/Amateur Final, sponsored by Frog Pond Stables, six were clear to advance to the jump-off, but it came down to two rides that were clear over the jumps. Grace Lowe and Vogue TW put down the time to beat at 33.076 seconds with a quick, neat ride but following them was Eloise Eisner of New York, NY, riding Abigail Gordon's Toy Soldier.

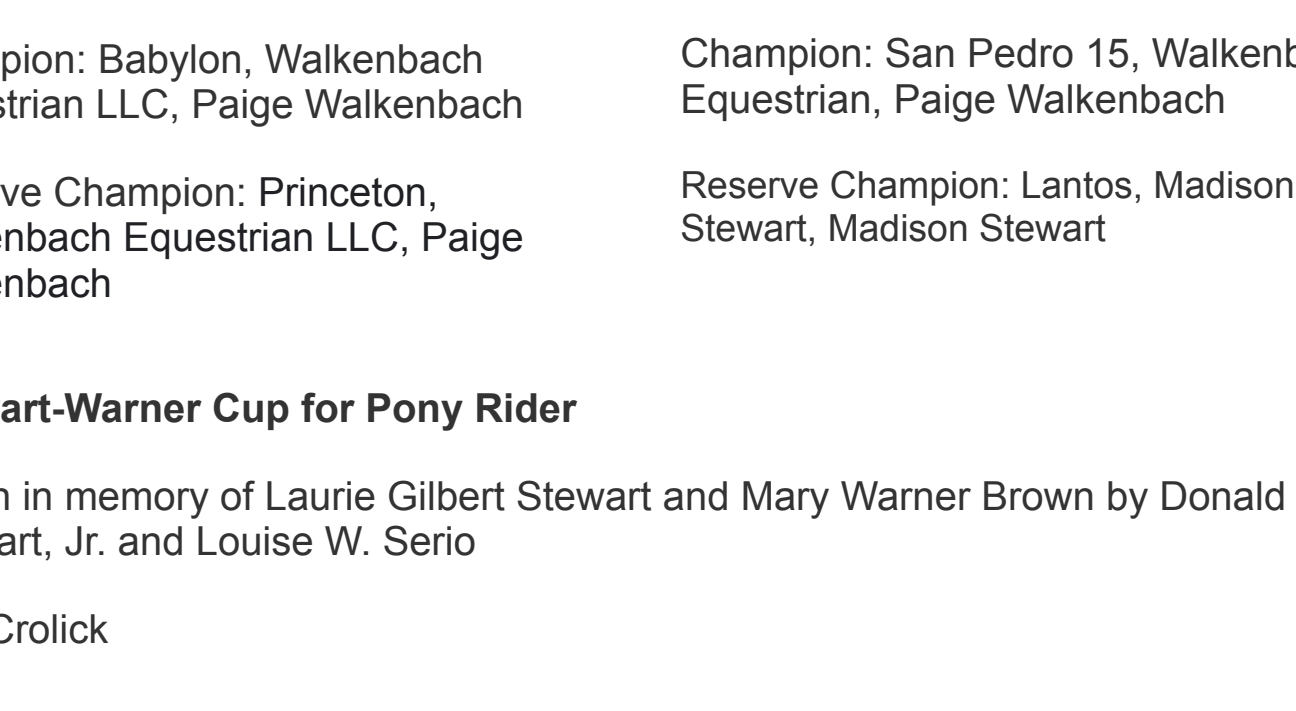
Eisner raced around with Toy Soldier, executing a phenomenal rollback to the final line to cross the timers in 32.100 seconds for victory. Eisner won the Best 1.20m/1.25m Junior Jumper Award sponsored by RPW Show Horses LLC. The fastest four-faulter in the jump-off was Scarlett Samuels riding Karissa HDH, who finished in 31.552 seconds for third place.



Toy Soldier is "game for anything" and won with Eloise Eisner. Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

"I wanted to go into the first round giving him a very confident ride and making sure that he wasn't spooking or anything, and to set him up for the jump off," explained Eisner of her plan for the class. "For the jump-off, my trainer told me to ride from the skinny almost like I was leaving out to the line. I had a good canter so I could spin back so neat to leave one out, and then I could have a good one going into that last line."

[Read More](#)



[Hear from Eloise Eisner about her win with Toy Soldier.](#)

## Smith Takes a Grand Trip to Winner's Circle

Jumping to the 2025 CCHS Grand Pony Hunter Championship sponsored by Pegasus Show Stable and The Endicott Family was On Tour, ridden by Kenzie Smith of Shoreham, NY, for Charlotte Kelly. With a first and two seconds over fences and second in the under saddle, they captured the Large Pony Hunter championship as well.

For their win, they were presented with The VanderMoore Designs Trophy. Smith was presented with the Best Pony Rider Award sponsored by Archibald Cox and Brookway Stables and presented with The Kitty Borissoff Memorial Trophy donated by her many friends. With a score of 90, the pair also won the Best Marshall + Sterling Pony Trip of the Show.



Kenzie Smith and On Tour were the Large Pony and Grand Pony Hunter Champions. Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

Smith has ridden On Tour, known as "Morley" for almost two years, and their partnership has been a successful one. At last year's CCHS, the pair were reserve champions in the Large Pony Hunters and won trip of the show.

"It's really nice to be grand," said Smith. "Most of the time I've only been reserve champion by one or two points. I liked how consistent we were all weekend."

[Read More](#)

## Gallery of Champions



**Small Pony Hunter**

Sponsored by the Goodwin Family

The Harper Taskier Wright Memorial Trophy, given in memory of Harper by her loving parents Michael and Alexandra Borissoff Wright, friends, and family whose lives she touched.  
Champion: Celebration, McLain Ward, Lilly Ward  
Reserve Champion: Clovermeade Heartthrob, Swede Ventures LLC, Grace Stenbeck-Werner



**Medium Pony Hunter**

Sponsored by The Goodwin Family

Champion: Orchard Hills Firefly, Hilton Westcott, Hilton Westcott  
Reserve Champion: Best Sport, Charlotte Morassutti, Charlotte Morassutti



**Large Pony Hunter**

Sponsored by Highland Farm and The Pacilla Family

The Tampa Horse Show Trophy donated by Dr. Suzanne Smith  
Champion: On Tour, Charlotte Kelly, Kenzie Smith  
Reserve Champion: Prestige, Swede Ventures LLC, Grace Stenbeck-Werner



**Children's Hunter Pony**

Sponsored by DFG Stables

Champion: Valou, Rivers Edge, Penelope Sugg  
Reserve Champion: All Star, Robert Caputo, Logan Baras



**Small Junior Hunter 16-17**

Sponsored by Three Ships LLC

Champion: Babyton, Walkenbach Equestrian LLC, Paige Walkenbach  
Reserve Champion: Princeton, Walkenbach Equestrian LLC, Paige Walkenbach



**Large Junior Hunter 16-17**

Sponsored by Beacon Hill Show Stables

Champion: San Pedro 15, Walkenbach Equestrian, Paige Walkenbach  
Reserve Champion: Lantos, Madison Stewart, Madison Stewart

## Stewart-Warner Cup for Pony Rider

Given in memory of Laurie Gilbert Stewart and Mary Warner Brown by Donald E. Stewart, Jr. and Louise W. Serio  
Ava Crolick

[Photos by Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

## Platinum and Gold Sponsors

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