

USET FOUNDATION'S AACHEN BENEFIT GALA RAISES \$1.2 MILLION

STORY BY JENNIFER WARD/JUMP MEDIA | PHOTOS BY LUXECINÉ

The United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation's "Aachen" benefit gala raised nearly \$1.2 million in support of U.S. equestrian sport ahead of the 2026 World Championships in Aachen, Germany.

Held on Friday, Jan. 16, at ROasis Riding Oasis in Wellington, the event brought together members of the equestrian and philanthropic communities for an evening dedicated to advancing and honoring U.S. excellence on horse sport's greatest international stages.

Hosted by USET Foundation Trustee Rowan O'Riley, guests enjoyed a night of celebration that included an authentic German-themed cocktail hour, dinner, dancing and a highly anticipated live auction, with proceeds directly benefiting the USET Foundation's mission to provide critical resources for US Equestrian's High Performance Programs and U.S. equestrian athletes and horses.

The benefit's live auction featured an exclusive lineup of sought-after experiences and one-of-a-kind items that garnered enthusiastic bids in support of U.S. equestrian teams. A standout moment was the bidding for a stay at the luxury Mexican retreat Casa de Casas, donated by the Casas family, which was sold twice, generating significant excitement among the attendees. A signed Fender guitar donated by Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfa also drew spirited bidding and added to the night's celebratory momentum. ➤



The Whitney Stone Cup and the Lionel Guerrand-Hermès Trophy.

Show jumping athlete Lillie Keenan (center) was presented with the Whitney Stone Cup at the Aachen benefit by USET Foundation Chairman, President and CEO Kristi Mitchem (left) and Chairman Emeritus W. James McNerney Jr.





(Left) Akiko Yamazaki (center) was presented with the R. Bruce Duchossois Distinguished Trustee Award by USET Foundation Chairman, President & CEO Kristi Mitchem (left) and Chairman Emeritus W. James McNerney Jr. (Center) Eventing athlete Cassie Sanger (second from left) was presented with the Lionel Guerrand-Hermès Trophy. (L-R) Kristi Mitchem, Cassie Sanger, W. James McNerney Jr., Raphaella Guerrand-Hermès and Olaf Guerrand-Hermès. (Right) Philip Richter with signed guitar donated by Bruce Springsteen.

“Sustaining competitive excellence at the highest levels of equestrian sport requires hard work, unwavering commitment and meaningful resources,” USET Foundation Chairman, President & CEO Kristi Mitchem said. “Unlike many other countries, the United States does not receive government funding for equestrian sport. Our teams rely largely on support from the USET Foundation and our dedicated donors. We are tremendously grateful for the generosity shown at this year’s benefit, which raised nearly \$1.2 million for the 2026 FEI World Championships in Aachen and U.S. equestrian programs.”

The USET Foundation’s prestigious annual awards were also presented during the gala. Akiko Yamazaki, a committed champion of the USET Foundation for almost two decades, was presented with the R. Bruce Duchossois Distinguished Trustee Award. She has served as a USET Foundation trustee since 2010 and was elected an officer of the board in 2019. She is also co-chair of the USET Foundation’s “Pathway to the Podium” campaign, helping to lead the foundation as the United States prepares to host the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games.

“Sustaining competitive excellence at the highest levels of equestrian sport requires hard work, unwavering commitment and meaningful resources...”

We are tremendously grateful for the generosity shown at this year’s benefit, which raised nearly \$1.2 million for the 2026 FEI World Championships in Aachen and U.S. equestrian programs.”

– Kristi Mitchem of the USET Foundation

Show jumping athlete and Wellington resident Lillie Keenan was awarded the Whitney Stone Cup. Presented annually, the Whitney Stone Cup acknowledges an active competitor whose consistent excellence in international competition and sportsmanlike conduct exemplify the USET Foundation’s highest ideals and traditions.

Eventing athlete Cassie Sanger received the Lionel Guerrand-Hermès Trophy, awarded annually to a junior or young rider in an Olympic discipline who exemplifies the U.S. Equestrian Team’s ideals of sportsmanship and horsemanship. Sanger, 21, had an impressive 2025 season, stepping up to the five-star level, where she enjoyed strong performances riding Redfield Fyre.

In addition to supporting the 2026 FEI World Championships in Aachen, funds also support the USEF High Performance Programs and elite athletes and horses, including developing athletes through USEF High Performance Pathway initiatives and international programs that help identify, develop and prepare future team talent.

The USET Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports the competition, training, coaching, travel and educational needs of the U.S.’s elite and developing international equestrian athletes and horses in partnership with the USEF.

For more information, or to support the USET Foundation and U.S. equestrian athletes and horses, visit www.uset.org/donate. 