

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Distribution after January 21, 2017



Minnesota Horse Council Announces 2017 Horse of the Year Awards

Milaca, Minnesota, January 20, 2017. The Minnesota Horse Council announced the 2017 Horse of the Year Awards at their Annual Meeting held Saturday, January 21, 2017 at the Marriott West, Minnetonka, MN. The Minnesota Horse Council honors worthy horses with the Horse of the Year Award by selecting a Horse of the Year winners based on candidates submitted to the Horse of the Year committee. The horse to be nominated should be special, a horse who has contributed in the past to the horse industry in Minnesota, and who was a model for others.

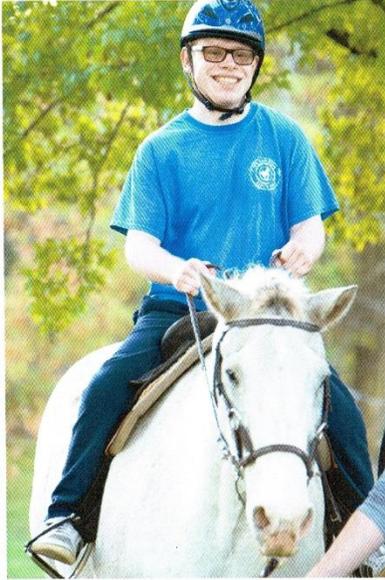
The 2017 Minnesota Horse Council Horse of the Year winners were Chocolate Chip Kisses and Buddy. Excerpts from the nomination materials for each horse are included below.



Chocolate Chip Kisses

Choco was 16 years old in 2016. His Grand Sire is Zips Chocolate Chip - the All Time Leading Sire of Western Pleasure Horses and his Great Grand Sire is Zippo Pine Bar. Choco completes a 3rd generation of Breyer horse models. I know of no other horse here in Minnesota who has been immortalized by Breyer.

As Carla Demchuk said in the beginning of this quest, "Choco represents a little girl's dream pony who took her to the World and fulfills her need for a friend as she faces this cancer toe to toe, and hoof." This once in a lifetime pony has been a member of the Demchuk family since 2010. Choco is 16 years old and is one tenth of an inch under 14 hands, qualifying him to be re-typed as a Pony in the Pinto Horse Association of America. Choco proves his versatility, going in the Western Classes, English - he especially loves the Show Hack Class, Trail, Halter and Showmanship. Yet, at home, you will find him being ridden bareback, sometimes without a bridle on, sometimes not even a chest strap and just being a huggable horse with Lauren.



Buddy

Buddy is one of the wonderful therapy horses at We Can Ride. In fact, he is so wonderful he has been here longer than any other staff member! He is now on high eighth year as a therapy horse. Buddy is a client and volunteer favorite and always puts a smile on every ones face as they walk through the barn and has taught riders confidence and riding skills. Buddy at age 29 is going strong considering the average time for a therapy horse is 3 years. He has helped so many riders through his patience and giving heart. He loves his job and has helped numerous riders with different disabilities from physical, cognitive and emotional, learn how to ride, as well as face other obstacles throughout their life. We all know we can count on Buddy to listen to his riders and volunteers and take care of his rider.

After so many good years of service to We Can Ride by serving his community and riders, we have decided to retire Buddy after fall session to return home to his owner to enjoy his retirement. We are all sad to see him leave, but we know that after so many years of amazing work he deserves to enjoy his retirement.

The Minnesota Horse Council, a non-profit corporation, encourages and supports equine-related activities, concerns and education. Founded in 1935, the Council began as a vehicle for horse owners and exhibitors to coordinate horse activities with the Minnesota State Fair Board. Since then the Minnesota Horse Council has evolved into an umbrella organization uniting and supporting equine activities throughout the state.

Note: For a downloadable version of this Press Release, please contact the Minnesota Horse Council Promotions Committee chairperson at promotions@MNHorseCouncil.org or 320-761-3990 or see www.mnhorsecouncil.org.