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Historic 33rd Annual Darley Awards Delivered Virtually Due to COVID-19, Recognizes America's Best for Arabian Racing

Smyrna, DE – The 2020 Darley Awards will go down in history as the first Darley Awards ceremony to be delivered virtually in the 33 years of the event's heralded existence. Originally scheduled to be held in Houston on March 21st, the event was canceled just eight days prior as COVID-19 (coronavirus) concerns escalated and a worldwide pandemic was declared.

Event team members pivoted to a new plan: Creating the first-ever Virtual Darley Awards event using social media technology to bring the Arabian racing community together. Even an official Darley Awards cocktail was declared! The Darley Double," a double-shot bourbon cocktail shaken with fresh juices and infused with sage, was promoted the week prior, encouraging virtual guests to sip during the Darley Awards. The virtual event was both unprecedented and also highly successful, and included video messages from Arabian Racing Cup (ARC) stewards, event coordinator Evie Tubbs Sweeney, interviews with nominee owners throughout 2019, a moment of silence for Nancy Blewett who passed away in 2019, highlights from emotional breeders, owners, trainers and jockeys, and more, in a moving 45-minute presentation produced and hosted by Jonathan Horowitz and Ashley Gubich.

The ARC extends its congratulations, once again, to the following Darley Award winners of the 2019 racing year:

RB RICH LYKE ME: Darley 3 Year Old Colt/Gelding of the Year

RB KINETIC: Darley 3 Year Old Filly of the Year

RB TEXAS HOLD EM: Darley 4 Year Old Colt/Gelding of the Year

DANCE WITH ME BW: Darley 4 Year Old Filly of the Year

EASTER MAN: Darley Older Horse of the Year

UPTOWN SANDY GIRL: Darley Older Mare of the Year

DIANNE K WALDRON: Darley Breeder of the Year

ROSEBROOK FARMS LLC: Darley Owner of the Year

JERENESTO TORREZ: Darley Trainer of the Year

CAROL CEDENO: Darley Jockey of the Year

EASTER MAN: Darley Horse of the Year

This year's Horse of the Year Category was comprised of monumental talent. The nominees included: Dance With Me BW, Easter Man, and Uptown Sandy Girl. But the nod went to the veteran, Easter Man. Joe Gillis, breeder and owner of

Horse of the Year champion, Easter Man, was emotional talking about the win for his beloved horse.

“In this sport, you’ve got to have heroes for people to get behind,” said Gillis. “Easter Man was one of the heroes. He is a very popular horse in the Arabian racing community even though it took him several hard-earned years to reach this achievement. He has definitely earned it. Easter Man is a special horse.”

This is the fourth Darley Award win for Easter Man, who was named Darley Champion 3-Year-Old Colt/Gelding in 2015, Darley Champion 4-Year-Old Colt/Gelding in 2016, and Darley Champion Older Horse in 2019. In addition to this year, he was also been nominated for Horse of the Year in 2017 and 2018. Easter Man earned each of these titles under his long-time trainer, 2019 Trainer of the Year, Jerenesto Torrez, and 2019 Jockey of the Year, Carol Cedeno.

The Gillis’s have been breeding and racing Arabian racehorses under their Allegro Arabians colors since 1992, and are considered one of the most successful Arabian race breeders in the country, with an impressive foal-to-champion ratio from a breeding program that depends on its own blood – it rarely incorporates outside blood – and is focused on American breeding lines. In fact, the enthusiastic couple were the owners and breeders of the 2018 Horse of the Year as well, Quick Sand AA, who Gillis plans to return to racing even yet this season

But for Easter Man, an eight-year-old grey stallion by Burning Sand and out of Angel Proof (by NF Proof) who earned a total of \$369,945 and won 16 of his 37 lifetime starts, his racing days are over as he enjoys a life of leisure at the Gillis’s farm in Columbus, Mississippi, where he will now officially begin his breeding career. How fitting that he won the last race of his career – and the last race of 2019, the Arabian Stallion Stakes Sponsored by Alliant Insurance Services (G3) at Lone Star Park in Dallas, Texas, last November.

Two additional new awards were also presented during the Virtual Darley Awards. The Chief Steward’s Award is chosen at the discretion of the ARC Chief Steward to recognize key individuals or entities whose contributions to the Arabian racing community are uniquely inspirational, influential, and/or impactful in the Arabian racing community. This year, ARC Chief Steward Jon Henningsgard recognized three individuals:

- **Fenneka Bentley, Trainer**
- **Jeremias Castro, Trainer**
- **David Kaden, Owner/Trainer**

Next, the Leadership Impact Award recognizes individuals or entities who have demonstrated exceptional and ongoing positive impact of our Arabian racing community. The following entities were recognized:

- **Goldensands Racing, LLC**
- **The MHF Racing Club**
- **The Plesanton Arabian Racing Club (PARC)**

The Arabian Jockey Club’s Facebook live streaming service, AJC LIVE, used its popular outreach platform to stream the Virtual Darley Awards as a Facebook Premiere, reaching more than 1,700 people from around the world and climbing.

The virtual coverage was made possible by support from Dianne Waldron of RoseBrook Farms, owner of the Darley 3 Year Old Colt/Gelding, RB Rich Lyke Me; Darley 3 Year Old Filly, RB Kinetic; and Darley 4 Year Old Filly and Horse of the Year nominee, Dance With Me BW.

Additionally, the Darley Sprint Sponsored by Lufthansa Cargo (Listed) was virtually broadcasted the night before the Darleys via AJC LIVE and courtesy of the Texas Arabian Breeders Association to officially kick off the weekend's virtual activities. Four 2019 Darley Award nominees were entered in the race. To no one's surprise, superstar mare Uptown Sandy Girl showed her talent once again, winning by a neck over Allegro Arabians' Big Ben AA.

"There isn't a grander celebration of the Arabian racehorse and its people than the Darley Awards, and this year was no exception," said Jon Henningsgard, Chief Steward of the USA Darley Awards' Arabian Racing Cup (ARC) and owner of Uptown Arabians located just outside Houston, Texas. "Even virtually, it was a weekend full of inspiration, fun, excitement, and renewed passion that came from reliving moments and being reminded why we do what we do, regardless of winning a Darley award, or not. It's what we strive to do."

The 34th Annual Darley Awards will return to Houston in 2021.

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The Arabian Racing Cup is a non-profit corporation founded in 1983 by Dr. Sam Harrison and run by its distinguished Board of Stewards, The Cup is dedicated to the national and international promotion of breeding and racing purebred Arabian horses. Launched in 1987, the Darley Awards are the crowning jewel of the Arabian Racing Cup, recognizing the most outstanding racehorses, jockeys, owners and breeders of the Arabian horse community in the United States. For more information, visit www.ArabianRacingCup.com