



## Swan Song Show Performance Earns Sportsmanship Award for Young Rider With an Admirable Attitude

In September 2024, the [Experience Equestrian League \(ExEL\)](#) show at the Germantown Charity Horse Show grounds in Germantown, TN, was the very last for the partnership of 11-year-old Carlyn Burns and her beloved pony, Mikey. She knew she was outgrowing him, and the family had made the tough decision for the 18-year-old Mikey to step down to an easier job following the show.



Carlyn Burns and Mikey at the ExEL show, where they won the Equitation Challenge. Photo by [Refined Media by Alexis](#).

It was a day tinged with sadness for Carlyn, but she made it memorable by winning the Equitation Challenge out of a field of more than 40 starters and was second in the Hunter Derby. It was not just her results in the ring that garnered Carlyn the Connaway & Associates Junior Sportsmanship Award that day; she was spotted in the barn helping her barn mates and supportively cheering them on ringside.

"This award will always have a special place in my heart because of the memories that are tied to it with Mikey," said Carlyn, whose meaningful three-year partnership with Mikey was crowned by the sportsmanship award. "Being around horses has taught me a lot about friendship, responsibility, hard work, and dedication. It has also taught me to have patience. That can be hard when you're out in the big arena, and it's just you and the horse, but those moments are what has built me to be a better rider."



Carlyn Burns with Mikey and the sportsmanship award platter. Photo by [Refined Media by Alexis](#).

It was exactly this attitude, positivity, and camaraderie that the sportsmanship award's founding sponsor, Laura Connaway of [Connaway & Associates Equine Insurance Services, Inc.](#), wished to foster and reward when the series launched in 2024.

Carlyn's mom, Anna Burns, said, "In this sport, we sometimes get caught up in the ribbons and placings. When we dismount, we are all humans who may or may not have had a good show. To be honored with a sportsmanship award means that you're doing something right off your mount."

[Read the Full Article](#)

## Expanded 2025 Sportsmanship Series

For 2025, the Connaway & Associates sportsmanship series has been expanded to cover five [ExEL events](#), and the newly introduced [Connaway & Associates Amateur Sportsmanship Award](#) will be presented at each alongside the Connaway & Associates Junior Sportsmanship Award. This brings the total number of sportsmanship awards to 10 at the 2025 ExEL shows at Germantown Charity Horse Show grounds in Germantown, TN. The first show in the series runs April 25-27.

## Podcast Corner

Connaway & Associates is proud to sponsor two popular new podcasts: [Horse Person](#) and [Dear Horse World](#). Three inspiring episodes have recently arrived, featuring [U.S. dressage rider Anna Buffini](#), [British Olympic gold medalist Harry Charles](#), and [Belgian show jumping athlete Emilie Conter](#).



[Listen to the latest supported episode of the Horse Person podcast, featuring U.S. dressage athlete Anna Buffini](#)

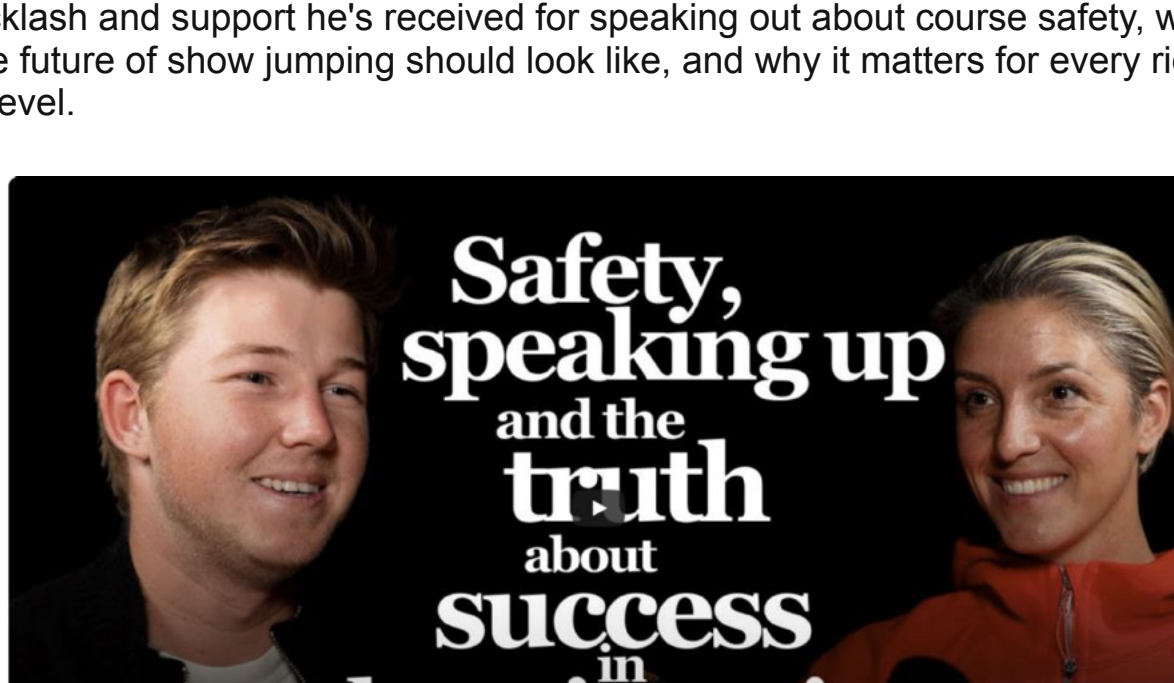
[Listen to Anna Buffini](#)

### Anna Buffini

Anna's dressage career has brought with it tremendous highs and crushing lows; from being in the hunt for Olympic selection to watching her string of horses slowly ebb away, Anna has run the gamut. In this episode, she discusses the strategy of building a developing pipeline of up-and-coming horses not just to get to the top but to stay there — which is tough to actualize. Through all she has endured, Anna has acquired the tools to withstand the mental knocks, and she shares how others can begin to develop their own toolboxes, too.

### Harry Charles

The 25-year-old British show jumping athlete discusses dangerous course designs that he believes are putting horses and riders at unnecessary risk and also his experiences growing up with show jumping royalty — like Harry, his father, Peter Charles, is an Olympic team gold medalist. In this candid interview, he shares firsthand insights from his own near-career-ending fall, the backlash and support he's received for speaking out about course safety, what he believes the future of show jumping should look like, and why it matters for every rider, no matter the level.



[Listen to Harry Charles](#)

### Emilie Conter

Fresh from her first-ever CSI5\* win — a career-defining feat achieved on International Women's Day — Conter shares her against-the-odds story that proves all the early mornings, setbacks, and sacrifices were worth it. She discusses how patience, consistency, and the right training transformed her partner Bella, a "slow" young horse, into a five-star superstar. She sheds light on the power of an uplifting coach and gives listeners a peak into the legendary Stephex horse empire. It's an episode packed with insights, inspiration, and unforgettable moments.



[Listen to Emilie Conter](#)

## About Connaway & Associates Equine Insurance Services, Inc.

At Connaway & Associates, teamwork allows horse people to protect horse people. Since 1992, Connaway & Associates has built a strong reputation as a reliable partner in competition and in business. Connaway & Associates is licensed in 48 states and offers competitive insurance coverage options through several A-rated admitted insurance carriers. Connaway & Associates does the work so its clients can enjoy their passion for horses. For more information on Connaway & Associates and its offerings, visit [www.connaway.net](#).