

2026-March-April

- **International Committee** - nothing to report
- **National Championship Committee**

The AERC office will be mailing all belt buckles currently held to Diane Connolly. Based on participant numbers from previous National Championships, our inventory is sufficient: 29 for one hundred-mile competitors and 80 for fifty-mile competitors.

The committee was considering the purchasing of 30 additional 100-mile buckles from Montana Silversmith; however, the cost per buckle has increased to \$165, compared to the original price of \$105 and the subsequent price of \$135 during our last purchase.

The Committee would like advice whether to continue with Montana Silversmith or look into more economical alternatives. Fifty-mile buckles were previously sourced from Crown Awards at \$25 each. Although these are not of the same quality as the 100-mile buckles, they remain adequate. Current pricing from Crown Award will be further investigated.

We intend to consult Ride Managers (RMs) of comparable events regarding their suppliers and pricing for belt buckles.

Efforts to secure a **suitable venue** for future National Championship are ongoing. Committee members welcome suggestions for qualified ride sites.

Update from Diane Connolly, 2026 NC Ride Manager:

A designated sponsorship committee is actively recruiting sponsors. Confirmed sponsorships include:

- Liversage Saddles: Two saddles for first place finishers in the NC 55 and 100-mile events
- Animal Portraits by Pam Stoneburner (award)
- Equivisor (top ten awards)
- VetLine: \$2,600 in product donations including electrolyte tubes for rider swag bags and buckets for awards
- Triple Crown Feeds: Forage for Bird Haven, grain and beet pulp for Laurel Run, and sample bags of new mash for all riders
- Drip Drop Human Electrolytes (swag bag samples)
- NUUN Human Electrolytes (samples for swag and Laurel Run vet check)
- Smart Earth Camelina Corp
- Bitchin' Sauce (samples)

- Riding Warehouse (lip balm for swag bags)
- Turner Tack (award)
- Country Air Farm (Mary Coleman)
- Becky Pearman Photography (portraits for all riders)

Additional sponsorships are anticipated.

OD successfully applied for and received a substantial grant from the Virginia Horse Industry Board (VHIB), covering costs for the primary event tent and rental of 16 Johnny Blue porta pots. VHIB grants are awarded to organizations dedicated to promoting and increasing horse events within Virginia.

• Marketing Committee

In the first quarter of the 2026 season, the Marketing Committee focused on promoting the AERC Annual Convention and upcoming AERC Championships across social media platforms. Efforts included coordinated content highlighting speakers, sessions, and overall event value, along with broader messaging designed to engage both current members and prospective riders.

The AERC Media Crew initiative, organized by committee member Victoria Mexcur, has officially launched and is beginning to gain momentum. This group of volunteers is working to capture and share ride experiences across regions, helping showcase the diversity, community, and appeal of endurance riding in a more dynamic and visual way.

Committee members will be developing outreach tools to support local engagement. Requested materials include a PowerPoint template and customizable flyers for presentations to trail riding groups and other equestrian audiences. The Marketing Committee will be meeting later this week to discuss the development of these resources and determine how best to support member-led outreach efforts moving forward.

The committee is also exploring the implementation of the RunSignup virtual ride platform as a way to generate additional revenue while encouraging riders to continue riding and conditioning year-round. This initiative would also provide a supportive structure for participation outside of sanctioned events, along with opportunities to introduce new awards and recognition programs.

Overall, the committee remains focused on strengthening visibility, supporting grassroots engagement, and expanding the reach of AERC through both digital and in-person channels.

Junior / Young Rider Committee

April 2026 JR/YR committee quarterly report: The office continues to send us the names of the new Jr/Yr members for this ride year. Lisa Schneider and MJ Fridley continue to send them individual welcome messages. There have been only 3 responses to these e-mails. But the

great news is that there have been FORTY new young members this ride season. For the first 20, I assumed it was coincidence. But with 40, I have to think our committee has had an impact.

Here is the breakdown by region of new JR and YR members:

CT-4
MW-1
MT-2
NE-6
NW-4
PS-2
SE-10
SW-1
W-10

We continue to submit articles for Endurance News. I recently wrote one about Ann Ayala, since we have a scholarship named after her, and many did not know who she was. It should be out soon.

Elizabeth Farina is writing an article about Kathy Brunjes, since she has the Young Rider award named after her. We hope to get both of these articles published on the website so we can have a testimony to these two important ladies.

There were two inquiries about scholarships. One was too young, and one did not have enough miles. I did post a reminder on Facebook about it.

Elizabeth Farina also hosted a Distance Ride Clinic on March 14, and another free Endurance and CTR beginner's clinic will be held on April 12, both in the NE.

We provided Jr Stand Alone BC awards at Tonto Twist in January and the Original Old Pueblo in March. We also had a pinata at the Old Pueblo ride. The kids loved whacking the pinata and the chocolate that tumbled out.

I continue to hammer Jr. awards and accomplishments on Facebook. I also posted a "Bunny Madness" post to show how much fun we can be. Most of the posts get about 100 responses. In fact, the last post about the cheerful intro rider received about 200 reactions. My intention is to do some good PR for AERC.

Respectfully submitted, Maribel Paulson Jr/Yr committee chair