

Grant Smith

by Heather Raftery

Intelligent, dedicated, kind and driven. These words and many more describe Grant Smith, 16, from Grand Island, Nebraska, this year's winner of the Todd Drummond Memorial Award. Nominated by the Cutting Horse Association of Nebraska, this polite young man has proven himself as a great student, a focused competitor, and a wonderful person.

Started in 1984, the Todd Drummond Memorial Award is given to a single Youth cutter every year. The criteria for the award are scholastic achievement, involvement in extracurricular activities, and involvement in the cutting horse industry. The winner is presented a trophy buckle and memorial plaque at the NCHA World Championship Futurity in Fort Worth, Texas.

Grant Smith, the son of Kirby Smith, fulfills all these criteria with flying colors. An excellent student, Grant has maintained a 93 percent grade average through his sophomore year. A junior this year, his classes include numerous advanced placement classes in subjects such as algebra, American literature and American history. He is also taking chemistry, but says that his favorite class is digital electronics, where he gets to build and conceptualize circuitry. He plans on going on to college to study aeronautical engineering, but does not yet know which college he will attend.

Grant is very active in his community as well. He is a member of the Grand Island E Free Church youth group and volunteered for the Equine Special Olympics when he was younger. He was also recognized by the *Grand Island Daily Independent* newspaper as the Grand Island Extra Special Youth in November 2005.



In addition to cutting, he is also very involved in the National High School Rodeo Association and FFA. He placed second in the NHSRA Boy's Cutting his freshman year and ended up in the Top 5 at the National High School Finals Rodeo in Gillette, Wyoming. His sophomore year, he placed third in the state association, was a member of the Wrangler All-Star Team, and was the National Boy's Cutting Director. He also volunteered at the Special Kids Rodeo, held every year at the National High School Finals Rodeo. He currently holds the Nebraska State Finals high score record with a 152 and the record for average on three gos with a 449.

His list of accomplishments in the NCHA is even more impressive. Grant started cutting six years ago, at the age of 10. He says his family bought a pleasure horse that was bred to cut and decided to take it to a show. From then on, they were hooked. Since then, Grant has won over 20 first place buckles, primarily on his 12-year-old gelding Sanjo Sneakers. He was the 2003, 2004, and 2005 Area 7 Junior and Senior Youth champion, has been a Western Nationals participant four years running. He has been a Youth contestant at the NCHA World Show in Amarillo, Texas, the past two years, and was a participant at the Youth Scholarship Invitational at the Summer Spectacular this year in Fort Worth, Texas.

Grant is also President of the Cutting Horse Association of Nebraska Youth Association and has been an Area 7 National Director for two years. He has already received his Bronze Award in the Levels of Excellence Award Program (L.E.A.P.), which awards points based on participation in Youth activities and the promotion of cutting. He was the recipient of the Jessica Kawolski Memorial Buckle from the Beef Empire Cutting Horse Association.

Grant says that cutting has probably been the most fun thing that he's ever done. Among other aspects, he most enjoys traveling to all the different places and meeting so many different people. When he learned that he had won the Todd Drummond Memorial Award, he was both completely surprised and extremely flattered. He hadn't been aware that he was even nominated, although why he was nominated is easy to see for anyone around him long enough. He says that one thing he always tries to make a point of during the cutting horse shows is to encourage the other Youth competitors, especially those younger than he is.

His advice to other Youth in the nation, "Keep trying to improve yourself and always try to set an example for those around you. You never know who may be watching, so always try to be a good role model for those younger than you." Without doubt, he is an outstanding Youth. Congratulations, Grant! ★