

Dear Minnesota Quarter Horse Racing Association,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for sending me on this amazing trip of a lifetime. It truly was a life changing experience and only solidified that I know I want to someday work within the horse racing industry. You will never know just how thankful I am to you for allowing me the opportunity to attend the Bank of America Challenge Championships at Los Alamitos Racecourse in California. While in California, I was under the supervision of Mr. Ward Stutz, Director of Youth for the AQHA, and Wendy Davis, Associate Coordinator of the Racetrack Industry Program at the University of Arizona. Both were extremely knowledgeable. Every morning in California we would head out to the racetrack to work with our assigned trainers, and every evening we would go to the racetrack to watch the races and absorb as much information as possible. On my trip, I was fortunate enough to work with Mr. Dan Fransisco. He was able and willing to answer every question that I had and teach me everything he knew about the horse racing industry.

We also had the opportunity to visit Vessels Farm where we saw such stallions as First Down Dash, No Secrets Here, and FDD Dynasty. I also got to see the Pacific Ocean for the first time in my life. We attended the Owners' Brunch, the party at the Finish Line Room, and a buffet and cocktail party at the Vessels club on the night of the Challenge Championships. I had the opportunity to meet some amazing people like jockey Eddie Garcia, track announcer Ed Burgart, and artist Ginny Harding.

I was able to attend workouts every morning and see how a racing stable is run. I saw the process at the test barn after a race. I learned how the starting gate works. I learned how to saddle an exercise saddle and a jockey saddle and a lot more. Much of the knowledge that I had gained on the Youth Racing Day at Canterbury Park was very beneficial while I was in California. On the morning of the Challenge Championships all students that attended the trip had to complete a barn test and a written test. These scores were compiled with two previous workbook scores and the scholarships were awarded accordingly. I scored the highest overall and was therefore named the Youth Race Experience Champion and awarded a check for \$2500. It was one of the most exciting moments of my life! Dan's horse, ThePartysOnFire, won a race the night before the Challenge Championships, and I got the honor of joining him in the winners' circle.

This truly was one of the best trips of my entire life. I made numerous friends and got an experience that very few people ever get. I think that this program is quite outstanding, and I am glad that the Minnesota Quarter Horse Racing Association is getting students involved with racing. I can never thank you enough for the opportunity that I received.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Vilchis