

“Investing Gracefully,” better known as Gracie, was truly one in a million. A 2010 mare sired by Investing Wisely and out of Im Good All Over, Gracie was bred by Michael and Vicky Clites of Brookings, South Dakota. Anyone who knew her knew she was something special. She was not just an exceptional horse; she was a dream-maker who helped turn countless dreams into reality. Her show career spanned far and wide, from North Dakota and Minnesota to Nebraska, Oklahoma, and even the All American Quarter Horse Congress in Ohio multiple times, leaving a lasting impression everywhere she went.

Zoey knew instantly when she went to look at Gracie in 2014 that she was the one. Even at just three years old, Gracie was perfect. She would follow Zoey anywhere without a halter or bridle, and from that moment on, there was no doubt, she was home.

Over the many years they showed together, they earned 932.5 open and youth points, and Gracie proved time and time again that she could excel in anything asked of her. She was a true all-around horse in every sense of the word. Even when she tried to be an English horse, she still gave it her all. Together, they earned a total of 64 youth all-around and reserve all-around titles, multiple Region 2 class wins, and they won the Youth All-Around at Region 2 every single time they attended.

Region 2 was always their favorite show. From late-night trail practices to even earning points in barrels and poles, Gracie was a trooper through it all. And after long days of giving her best, she was always rewarded with her favorite treats, animal crackers and baby carrots, never the big carrots though, a small but special tradition that perfectly captured her personality.

Gracie also earned a Top 15 finish in Horsemanship at the Level 1 Championships in Oklahoma, along with Top 10 finishes in Halter and Showmanship. Her favorite class, Trail, fittingly ended with a 6th-place finish, a reflection of her consistency, work ethic, and quiet grace.

After ten years of showing together, they earned their AQHA Youth Championship. Gracie always pushed Zoey to be better. Together, they grew, learned, and formed an incredible team. What they shared went far beyond the show pen, it was built on trust, dedication, and a bond that will last forever.

Gracie was also such an easy keeper, always willing and steady, which made every day with her a joy. Over the years, she benefited from the guidance and care of three amazing trainers, Darren Buckle, Rick Klaus, and Rylan Sundsbak, each of whom played an important role in helping her reach her full potential. Their expertise, patience, and

encouragement helped Gracie excel in every aspect of her career, and their influence is part of what made her the extraordinary horse she became.

When it came time for Zoey to go to college, Gracie was leased to Ryder Armstrong Jochim. Gracie stepped into a new partnership with the same heart and consistency she had always shown. Ryder and Gracie bonded quickly, and together they earned many North Dakota Quarter Horse Association and Minnesota Quarter Horse Association all-around awards, as well as multiple finalist and top 15 placings at the Congress and the Level 1 Championship Show. Most importantly, Gracie taught Ryder how to ride and show successfully. Honest, kind, and trustworthy, she showed Ryder what a good horse should feel like and how to work as a true team. For that and so much more, Gracie will always have a special place in the hearts of the Armstrong family, especially in Ryder's.

Tonight, as Investing Gracefully is honored as the 2025 NDQHA Horse of the Year, this award carries meaning far beyond titles and points. Though she is no longer here, Gracie's presence is still deeply felt, in every memory, every lesson, and every moment she shared with Zoey. What made her truly special was not only her talent, but the extraordinary bond and friendship built over ten years of trust, hard work, and love. Gracie was more than a show horse; she was a partner, a teacher, a constant, and a best friend. This honor celebrates not just her achievements in the arena, but the heart she gave and the connection she shared with Zoey. Her legacy will live on forever, and this award will always belong to Gracie.

Thank you!