



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: ZARA BUREN MEMORIAL AWARD 2025 RECIPIENT**

**February 19, 2025** - The Ontario Eventing Association, in partnership with the Zara Buren Memorial Foundation, is pleased to announce the recipient of the 2025 Zara Buren Memorial Award.

The Zara Buren Memorial Award, now in its fifth year, was created in honour of Zara Buren, a remarkable young rider known for her kindness, drive for excellence, passionate love of animals and dedication to her horse and the sport of Eventing. A talented rider with a commitment to training and learning, Zara always put her horse's needs first.

Established in 2020, The Zara Buren Memorial Foundation's main goal is to help youth with the desire, talent and work ethic to pursue their passion. The Foundation supports the Zara Buren Memorial Award, given annually through the Ontario Eventing Association to an exceptional junior rider who exhibits a passion for Eventing, sportsmanship and a commitment to their horse.

This year, a total of 24 junior riders from across the province applied for this award. The selection committee was comprised of members of the Ontario Eventing Association Board of Directors, as well as Zara's family.

### **Said The Haque-Buren Family:**

*"It's hard to believe that the Zara Buren Memorial Award is now in its fifth year. We are incredibly proud to see Zara's values— her kindness, dedication, and horsemanship reflected in this year's remarkable applicants. The selection process was both inspiring and challenging, as so many young riders impressed us with their passion and commitment.*

*After thoughtful deliberation, the Zara Buren Memorial Foundation is proud to support nine athletes in 2025. In addition to the main Award, we will also provide five Grants of Distinction and three Grants of Potential. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our outstanding applicants and their supporters and look forward to seeing each of you continue to #rideforzara."*

The Ontario Eventing Association is pleased to announce the recipient of this year's **Zara Buren Memorial Award** is Ellie Van Sickle (Ottawa, ON) who will receive a six thousand dollar grant, as well as a horse cooler and bonnet in burgundy, Zara's show colour.

### **Said Teddie Laframboise, Ellie's coach:**

*"I am delighted to learn that Ellie Van Sickle has been chosen to receive the Zara Buren Memorial Award. Ellie is a hard working young rider who takes superb care of her horse, who at times can be very challenging, but with whom she has developed a special relationship.*

*I could not think of a more deserving Eventing family who annually volunteers endless hours to prepare and run the Stevens Creek Horse Trials. I have no doubt that Ellie will represent Zara's legacy enthusiastically and with great pride."*

Sarah Richardson, President of the **Ontario Eventing Association** added:

*“Congratulations to Ellie Van Sickle, this year’s recipient of the Zara Buren Memorial Award. And a big thank you from the OEA to the Haque-Buren Family for their ongoing dedication to supporting Ontario’s junior Eventers in memory of their exceptional daughter, Zara.*

*We are thrilled that the Zara Buren Memorial Foundation and the Haque-Buren Family were able to recognize more exceptional young athletes than ever in 2025, and from one end of the province to the other. This demonstrates that the Award, now in its fifth year, has truly taken root in this province and, as time passes, it goes from strength to strength and inspires more young athletes to pursue excellence and mirror Zara’s value and her spirit.”*

Given the caliber of the applications, the Foundation Directors determined additional grants would be awarded. In addition to the Memorial Award, the Foundation will provide five Grants of Distinction and three Grants of Potential, supporting a total of nine athletes.

The five **Grants of Distinction** recipients will each receive a grant of one thousand dollars:

- Leah Cort (Tecumseh/Windsor, ON)
- Cameron Cuddy (Toronto, ON)
- Laena Good (Manotick, ON)
- Nicola MacLeod (Georgetown, ON)
- Paige West (Rousseau, ON)

The three **Grants of Potential** recipients will each receive a grant of five hundred dollars:

- Nola Cavanagh (Manotick, ON)
- Alexis Edwards (Wasaga Beach, ON)
- Lily Marshall (Utterson, ON)

Congratulations to this year’s applicants and to our grant recipients. We are excited to follow your eventing journey in 2025.

**#rideforzara**

**Ontario Eventing Association:**

The Ontario Eventing Association is committed to the promotion and development of the sport of Eventing in Ontario. Our goal is to encourage participation in Eventing through sanctioned competitions and educational activities. We seek to promote and create a love of the sport, as well as a true appreciation and understanding of the horse. The OEA is a not-for-profit organization, established for its educational and promotional endeavors.

**Zara Buren Memorial Foundation:**

The Zara Buren Memorial Foundation was created with the purpose of helping youth with the desire, talent and work ethic to pursue their passion. Zara Mathilde Buren, age 14, died on September 21, 2020 saving her beloved horse and will be forever remembered as an extraordinary child and exceptional athlete who gave love and kindness to every human and animal she encountered. She is missed beyond measure.

**Oakville Community Foundation:**

The Oakville Community Foundation is a registered charity in its 26th year of Building Community Through Philanthropy. The Foundation acts as a vehicle for community members to fulfill their charitable passions and has granted \$48.6 million to charitable organizations since its inception. The Foundation also supports investments of more than \$110 million in assets. We welcome families, businesses and residents into our community and give everyone the opportunity to be a philanthropist. The Foundation is one of the largest members of a national network of more than 190 Canadian community foundations.

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Photos of Ellie Van Sickle:

- Cross-country, in water, c. Marie-Pier Bolduc Photography
- Ribbon, c. Marie-Pier Bolduc Photography
- Cross-country over log, c. Delaney Graham Photography