Jared Slagle named announcer of year.

Putting on the Pony Express Rodeo each year involves tons of work by the Gothenburg Roping Club and other volunteers.

Last weekend, those efforts were rewarded when the local rodeo was named “Rodeo of the Year” by the Mid-States Rodeo Association (M-SRA) at the association’s finals rodeo in Lincoln.

Local rodeo chairman Jared Slagle was also named announcer of the year by the association and by the Nebraska State Rodeo Association earlier this month.

Slagle said the Gothenburg rodeo has never received rodeo-of-the-year accolades from the M-SRA.

“It means a lot to all of the great people that have helped make the rodeo possible for so many years, from the people that started it many years ago and have kept it going, to the hardworking volunteers on the committee today,” Slagle said.

Slagle said the community has supported the rodeo through volunteerism and financial support.

“And of course the fans,” he said.

More than 50 rodeos across Nebraska, Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa and Kansas make up the M-SRA membership which voted on both awards.

Slagle said he believes the first Pony Express Rodeo was in 1990.

Three years ago, the roping club elected a new board. Slagle said the rodeo has seen a 40% increase in attendance.

“We’ve tripled our prize money which has attracted contestants from all over the country,” he said. “We’ve become one of the largest rodeos in the state by the numbers of entries and have brought in world-class rodeo entertainment and clowns.”

With help from the Rotary After Dark organization, a beer garden and rodeo dance have been added.

Slagle noted that the roping club has also put a new roof on the concessions building and erected a new roping club sign.

More improvements are on the horizon such as a portable set of bleachers that can be used at the rodeo grounds and at various events throughout the community.

He said the roping club also wants to install new fencing, pens, a new crow’s nest for announcers and upgrade electricity.

New events in 2014 could include an All Women's Ranch Rodeo and possibly new youth events, Slagle said.

Currently, the grounds host the yearly rodeo, 4-H clubs and monthly jackpot barrel racings.

In addition to awards received by the roping club and Slagle, several local contestants placed at the M-SRA Finals Rodeo.

Marci Barlett was runner-up in barrel racing at finals and won $2,176. She ended up third in M-SRA standings by winning $9,241 the past year.

John Bartlett finished the season fourth in standings in the 45 and older division in tie-down roping.

Austin Jarvis was second at finals in bull riding and ended the year seventh in M-SRA standings.

M-SRA members compete in more than 50 rodeos throughout the summer to qualify for the finals.

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