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**NRHYA**

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National Finals Program Art Contest!

Here’s your chance to design the cover of both the Hunt Seat and Western National Finals programs!

Winners will receive a $45 visa gift card (enough to cover your IEA membership for the following season), a copy of the program, artwork exposure in Take the Reins magazine, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and SnapChat.

Western Program Designs due May 11, 2015.

Artwork size must be 8 ½” x 11” or smaller. Any medium is acceptable. Original artwork only.

Along with the artwork, submissions must include:
1. Rider information including Name, Team, Address, and Phone Number.
2. Description of work.

Artwork will be judged on:
1. Interpretation and clarity of theme to the viewer.
2. Creativity and originality of depicted theme.
3. Quality of artistic composition and overall design.
4. Overall impression of the art.

All original artwork submissions should be sent by the contest dates provided to:
Attn: McKenzie Yates
IEA Communications Coordinator
1429 King Avenue, Suite 100
Columbus, OH 43212

For questions please email mckenzie@rideiea.org

*** Improper or incomplete submission of materials will result in automatic contest disqualification. All submissions will become the property of the IEA. ***
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“EIGHTY PERCENT OF SUCCESS IS SHOWING UP”
—WOODY ALLEN

"These adventures make us closer friends and closer families, and give us great memories to share for years to come."

Hard work, lessons, practice and perseverance give our riders the skills they need to perform in the ring. But, let’s give some added credit to the more literal challenge of “getting there”—the ongoing obstacle we regularly encounter, WEATHER!

I recently attended an IEA show that set a personal record for me. It was officially the coldest day that I had ever been to a horse show! (Granted, I did grow up in the South, and I still find it hard to believe that I live in a state that sees daily snow, grey skies, and temperatures below freezing for at least four months out of the year.) But...when we woke up last weekend, my friendly weather app showed a NEGATIVE FIVE (-5) actual temperature! I took the screen shot, posted it on Facebook, and received lots of “likes” and comments. Plenty of other IEA members were about to brave the same temperatures that morning.

This made me think back to some other horse show weather adventures. There was the time when I insisted on taking my students to one last horse show before my maternity leave; it was a sweltering 100-degree day in July—NOT a pretty sight! There was the extremely rainy weekend when I got in trouble for “trashing” the school van because the kids had covered it in red clay and mud as they cowered from the weather all day. And, thinking of wet weather, there was our infamous California trip where dirt roads became rivers, and mudslides closed the route to the airport; it took us four extra days to get everyone home again. And, then there were the snow stories, like getting stuck on the Cincinnati interchange for 10 hours during an ice storm on our way to winter in Wellington, Florida. And there are countless memories of night drives with the snow blowing at the windshield in that blinding way that makes you swear you were inside a snow globe.

How many weather stories could we swap and share as a group of dedicated horse show patrons? Luckily, most of these unexpected adventures turn out to be pleasantly memorable. As it turned out, my recent “coldest horse show day ever” was really quite fun. We took turns buying rounds of coffee and hot chocolate, and playfully fought over who held the warm pizza boxes at lunchtime. We sat close, shared blankets and thumped our gloves together after every round. We enjoyed the cold and the fun together with our kids and fellow teams. These adventures make us closer friends and closer families, and give us great memories to share for years to come.

By all means, travel safely, and take a moment to pat yourself on the back for those days when just showing up may be the toughest part of the day!

Roxane Lawrence
Our lives are constantly enriched by the people we encounter. Those who have met Mehdi Kazemi will agree that he is colorful, with many bright facets and a unique, enduring luster. He is a burly, boisterous man, but the twinkle in his eye quickly reveals a teddy bear heart. As a coach and riding instructor, Mehdi leaves an indelible impression, and his career and contributions to the IEA are well worth celebrating.

Mehdi started riding as a child in Tehran, the capital of Iran. Once a week he’d head to the local stables where his lessons were conducted by a stern military officer with equestrian training. A visit to the royal country club and a tour of the royal stables gave him a glimpse of the glamorous world of Equestrian sport. He knew a career with horses was for him. “Coming from a family of doctors and diplomats, this was not a popular decision,” he recalls. “When a child’s future plans for himself and his parents’ plans don’t match, it’s difficult. I didn’t want to follow my father’s footsteps to become a doctor. I was stubborn and determined to follow my passion and chose horses. My parents had no idea what a future in the horse industry meant. Once they realized this was more than a phase and was a viable livelihood, they came around and were supportive. In the end it’s been a very good decision.”

In 1979, just as Mehdi was finishing high school, demonstrations against the Shah erupted into full-scale revolution and Mehdi left Iran for the United States. After a year at Emory and Henry College, he transferred to Virginia Intermont College to take advantage of their Equestrian program. Mehdi was not the typical Virginia Intermont student, especially among the equine studies majors. “I was the greenest one in the program, so I had to try really hard. Progress was slow but I eventually landed a spot on the IHSAA team,” he recalls. “Jimmy Cantwell, the Director of the Riding Program, could see that I was eager and wanted to improve. He took special interest in me and I really appreciated all his patience and good instruction.”

After graduating from Virginia Intermont, Mehdi landed a job teaching at the Columbia Horse Center in Laurel, Maryland. There he flourished and laid a solid foundation for his 30-year career. He taught hundreds of children and adults how to ride. All boasted with great pride that they were one of Mehdi’s prized pupils. His exuberant personality was at center stage every time he entered the ring. There was never any doubt that he was in command as horses and riders alike danced to his tune. His thundering voice and infectious giggles guided many nervous riders around daunting jumping courses.

Mehdi eventually moved on from Columbia and opened his own boarding and lesson operation at Winter’s Run Farm in Fallston, Maryland, with his life partner, Tommy Byrnes. Eventually, he was lured back into a larger lesson program at Featherdown Farm in Sparks, Maryland. He took over coaching the Greenway @ Featherdown IEA Team and helped re-establish the Towson University IHSAA team. Most recently he has been coaching at Old Homestead Farm in Wilmington, North Carolina. In 2012, he founded their IEA team and picked up coaching duties for the University of North Carolina-Wilmington IHSAA Team. Under his tutelage several of these teams and many individual riders have earned top awards at various national finals.

“Coaching the IEA kids gives me the greatest pleasure,”
Mehdi says, “While most college riders come to the program with considerable experience, IEA riders are the ones you develop from scratch.” He likes what participating in the IEA does for his students. “IEA teaches riders to think and adapt.” During team practices, he stresses issue management and variable management: how do I identify and deal with specific issues and how do I measure and cope with variables. “Riders must be able to read a horse quickly to assess and then deal with any issues like being stiff to the right or having difficulty picking up the correct lead at the canter. Variable management is establishing the appropriate rhythm and balance for that horse and then choosing the most efficient path. If riders can do that, they can be successful.” Mehdi also appreciates the camaraderie that IEA fosters among riders, coaches, and parents. “Beginner riders are as important as advanced riders to the team and everyone must pull together in running an IEA show.”

Along with being an IEA coach, Mehdi is known for being a great event host and clever course designer. “When designing courses, I like to think out of the box and try to send a message.” One of his most unique designs was crafted for the IEA Hunt Seat National Finals in 2010. The jumps were laid out in a pattern that spelled WIN. He is currently working on a TTR (Take the Reins) course. “I think it makes an event more special when the jumps not only present technical challenges like bending lines and roll-back turns but also have meaning.”

In January 2014, Mehdi was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s disease. This neuro-degenerative disease has already robbed Mehdi the use of his hands and much of his legendary stamina, and it will continue to progress at an unpredictable rate. Like any individual battling a life-threatening disease, Mehdi has good days and bad; but it is not in his nature to be defeated and his positive spirit continues to shine through. Last September, after helping to organize and register the Old Homestead Farm Team for the 2014–15 IEA competition season, Mehdi officially retired. Occasionally, he’ll go to the barn to teach a short lesson or two. Although it’s physically demanding, he feels it’s emotionally healthy.

Mehdi considers his contributions to the IEA as a coach, event host, clinician, and course designer to be the crown jewels in his long and successful career. “I feel fortunate to have turned my passion into a purpose. I don’t have an impressive riding resume but I have a strong teaching resume and longevity: and I’m proud of that!” And proud he should be: those fortunate enough to know Mehdi have been enriched by his friendship, teaching, and coaching and know what a truly great treasure he is.
This isn’t an article about a fairy tale team. This isn’t a Cinderella story and we don’t practice in a barn that could be mistaken for a castle. We’ve had our ups and downs and our share of bad attitudes, but with a side of blue ribbons. And contrary to what I make everyone believe, I sometimes have no idea what I’m doing... so there are some make-believe aspects to this. I won’t be telling you about a fantasy team, but I will be telling you about the methods I incorporated to craft a team worthy of my definition of “Success.” These methods not only brought inspiration to this small Central Massachusetts team, but it brought inspiration back to the person who coaches them—me.

This is my first year coaching a team, and I’ll admit, I was slightly disillusioned at how in-depth being an IEA coach could be. Riding, coaching and planning horse shows looked so easy when I was under the instruction of my college coach, Heather Johnson. She helped make college riding such a great experience for me, that I was eager to go back to the format of showing. I rode 42 times over four years in college. Planning an IEA show? No problem. Managing a team of pre-teens and teens? I’m totally hip, I got this. Parents? Parents love me, so what’s all the fuss? Maybe you’re starting to see where my disillusionment began.

In February of 2014, at the end of the season, I found myself at the head of the Nashoba Valley IEA Team. The Nashoba Team was a fair size during early registration in August of 2014. We had eight riders spread out for a full middle school lineup and five riders for our upper school team. Kathryn Cecere, my boss and the owner of the barn, kept pushing me to recruit more riders—and leave it to the green instructor to think that’s okay. Let me tell you where “recruiting more riders” got me. At our second show of the season, where I allowed our newest IEA members to compete for the first time, I had seven Future Beginner riders to mount, all for the same class. Seven riders, one class, all mine. Turning in college papers wasn’t nearly as stressful as having the warm-up ring steward shouting at me, “Are you ready yet?” My first-time riders all looked at me nervously, probably picking up on my frazzled state. What have I gotten myself into? I thought. How am I supposed to

BY LAUREN DONOHUE, IEA COACH

Emma Bernstein (left) and Cali Oliver (center), both captains, are assisting rider Anna Dias on Pumba before her Future Beginner class.

Emma Bernstein (left) and Cali Oliver (center), both captains, are assisting rider Anna Dias on Pumba before her Future Beginner class.
get stirrups adjusted, crops in hand, boots dusted off and calm these kids down, all while I know it’s pouring rain and I’m holding up the show? I was in a hole that I couldn’t get myself out of.

Thankfully, there were people to help lift me out.

That day, my two Varsity Open riders were also at that show. Emma Bernstein and Cali Oliver are both senior IEA riders and I had asked them to stay until the end of the show to assist me if needed. Emma and Cali had not been named captains of the team (as senior-year tradition dictated) because they hadn’t yet showed me they deserved it. But in those five minutes with seven young riders, all I saw was leadership oozing out of Emma and Cali’s pores. I was amazed at how the two girls calmed down the first-timers, adjusted stirrups and did a final safety check. ‘Make sure you smile!’ I heard them say to the young ones. Together, we successfully got those seven riders mounted. And though the warm-up ring steward was tapping her foot, those seven girls walked into the ring grinning ear-to-ear with newfound courage. We had smiles, a little nervous laughter and even some talking as the girls rode by me during their class. ‘Is it right?’ they whispered, loud enough for only me to hear as they questioned their diagonals. I could only smile and laugh.

I was proud of my Future Beginner riders for having a successful first show, but I was ecstatic with Cali and Emma for stepping up and helping me with a situation like that, especially after how their own mornings went. Both girls had placed less-than-spectacularly, producing some tears and rough comments that were hard for me to hear. I always try to preach sportsmanship and good attitude, and I was concerned that both girls were so upset about their ride that they would leave right after their classes, leaving me to help the younger riders by myself. It was the leadership they showed in that moment that earned them their captaincy and allowed me to trust them as role models for the younger riders. Without Emma and Cali’s encouraging words and knowledgeable hands, the day wouldn’t have been the success that was. Being looked-up-to is an empowering feeling, and it helped both girls start to work on their own attitudes.

It wasn’t only negative attitudes, but a lack of confidence I had to work on with my riders. When I first began coaching the Nashoba Team, most of the riders lacked the confidence it takes to not only succeed in riding, but in life outside the barn. Early on, I would ask horsemanship questions during lessons and get either a mumbled response or a nervous jabber, from my open riders to the beginners. I knew that if I was going to accomplish one thing, it would be to make these riders believe in themselves. If they couldn’t walk around on their own two feet with their eyes forward and shoulders back, how could I expect them to do it on a horse? Thus, I began the task of teaching equitation as well as self-esteem.

My goal for the Nashoba Team did not include qualification to Regionals. The goal was simply to have the team members learn to become good sports. Though competition is important, I believed that if I taught my riders to become true team players, they would have already won the competition. I wanted every rider to walk out of the ring, win or lose, and constructively tell me about their ride. ‘It doesn’t matter what place the judge gives you,’ I would tell them at every practice, ‘It only matters what you and I think when you walk out of that ring.’ Be teammates, believe in yourself, support each other and never say anything negative at a show. Encourage everyone, have fun and congratulate riders, no matter how they placed. That’s what a true sportsman does.

Through the autumn weeks, the team had been growing from each practice, sharing smiles and even some inside jokes. Everyone was cleaning tack, following safety guidelines in the aisle and being efficient and on time for practice—a huge improvement. Parents were happy, eager to watch the lessons and ask questions.

On November 8, 2014 we attended a show at Evenstride Farm in Byfield, Massachusetts. I found myself in the same Future Beginner conundrum at that show, but now I was up to eight Beginner riders instead of the original seven. Once again, Emma and Cali had tough rides, but this time they walked out of the ring, attitudes improved. They assisted me again in getting riders mounted, cleaned off and prepared. That day they were true leaders.

And on that bright November day, with a chilly temperature and excitement in the air for 140 rides, something clicked with the team. In fact, it clicked so completely that the Steward, Kathryn Quinlin, found me at the ringside later that afternoon during the Future Beginner division, when I was intensely focused on a rider in the class. She approached me...
and said, “Excuse me, but is that your team that’s sitting behind me?” At first, my thought was to apologize. ‘Are they being too loud? What if they’re saying negative things … my thoughts ran rampant, preparing for the worst.”

“No, no,” Kathryn Quinlin assured me. “Your team is amazing,” she said. “They are so encouraging towards each other. The riders are so happy and they seem very close. Even your parents; they clap after every round, even if none of your riders are in the class. You have such a great group.”

I managed a “thank you,” standing awestruck. I glanced behind her chair at the ringside, and there were three of my riders, happily observing the class and smiling the whole time. It was then that I remembered that I had a rider in the ring, who I had admittedly forgotten about (sorry, Paige). The appropriate response to Kathryn would’ve been lengthier than those two words, but that’s when something hit me: we had done it. I no longer had a bunch of individual riders: I had a team.

The Nashoba Valley Middle School Team went on that day to win Reserve Champion, but the length of our ribbon didn’t matter: I was on cloud nine from my conversation with the steward, and knowing that what I had wanted for my riders all along had finally happened. At our next show, we went on to receive Champion, further solidifying the formula I crafted.

No longer do my riders look down or stumble with their words when asked a question in practice. The team doesn’t just ride during my lessons, but converses constructively. Answering questions, leading discussions and talking with a projected voice across the indoor are just a few of the techniques I incorporate, and the results have been amazing. My riders don’t fear asking questions out of embarrassment, and some have even started inquiring into greater topics of horsemanship—things that I am happy to guide their exploration towards.

Currently, our Middle School Team has 17 points and we have one show left with our full team to qualify for Regionals. Though I am writing this before I’ll know what the end result is for our team, I can say that they have already surpassed my expectations. I don’t teach these kids for the money or the ribbons. I coach to see the smiles on the faces of young equestrians, and to know that I am making a difference in not only their riding goals, but their personal lives. All riders have bad rounds, but it’s how they grow from the experiences that make them a true sportsman.

The virtues that my college coach instilled in me; dedication, repetition, attitude and patience, I never fully understood until I needed to instill them in others. Like guiding the captains towards their goals, mine have been fulfilled just recently, even though I haven’t shown competitively in over two years. Not only has the team helped each other achieve their goals, but they have helped me achieve mine.

I would like to shine the spotlight on all the coaches that recognize the small, personal victories for riders and not just their competitive ones. We know it’s not a fairy tale, but a long road that definitely doesn’t have a prince waiting for us at the end. Our perfect endings are a little different. Mine include helping this wonderful sport grow further by educating the young equestrians who will someday take my place.

EDITOR’S NOTE
For the first time since becoming members, the Nashoba Valley Middle School IEA Team has qualified for Region Finals by earning a Reserve Champion at their most recent competition. In addition, the team also boasts six individual riders qualified for Region Finals.
The IEA holds a TRIVIA CONTEST with prizes on the third weekend of every month on Facebook. Follow the IEA on Facebook (IEA – Interscholastic Equestrian Association) to learn more.

1. True or False: Miniature horses are trained to guide the blind with the general belief being that they are more intelligent and can manage tasks that require long-term memory better than full size horses.
2. How long did it take the first west-bound trip of the Pony Express to go from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California?

3. A cowboy’s day to day working ranch maneuvers unleashed a horse’s pure equine athletic ability and continue today in a sport called?
4. In the adult horse, how many times does the heart beat in one minute?
5. How many days can a horse survive without food? Without water?

ACROSS
3. An adult horse’s brain weights 22 oz, about half that of a ______.
4. _____ _____ was the oldest recorded horse who lived to the ripe old age of 62.
7. Like ears on humans, this part of a horse never stops growing.
8. Horses use their ______ expressions to communicate.
9. A small indent in a horse’s skin (usually on the neck or shoulder) is called a prophet’s mark and is considered ______.
12. A broad splash of white that covers most parts of the forehead between the eyes and carries, right down the nose to the muzzle is called a _____.
14. Male or female horse that is less than one year old.
17. An organ that horses do not have that aids in digestion.
18. A narrow white mark, which runs down the face from the forehead.
21. When __________, a horse takes a breath with every stride.
23. ______ are social animals and will get lonely if kept alone.
24. If a horse has a red ribbon on it’s tail, it _____.
25. Horses thrive on ______, especially when it comes to food.

DOWN
1. Horses can _____ at 26-32 miles per hour.
2. Horses can cough up stuff or drool, but they cannot _____.
3. Horses are measured in this unit.
5. This famous Italian painter loved to draw horses.
6. The largest horse museum in the world is the International Museum of the Horse in __________.
10. You can tell a horse is cold by feeling behind their ____. If that area is cold, then so is the horse.
11. A horse’s _____ can weigh an amazing 10 pounds.
13. Horses will mourn the passing of a ______.
15. A female horse older than 4 years.
16. Horses have a great long term ______, (especially for places they were spooked).
19. Horses _____ 3-4 hours a day.
20. The best way to determine the ___ of a horse is by examining it’s teeth.
21. According to Arabian folklore, _____ horses are the fastest and bravest of all colors.
22. Horses have 16 muscles in each _____, allowing them to rotate 180 degrees.
HIS PAST FALL THE LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY (LIU) POST EQUESTRIAN TEAM made the bold choice to rescue a horse from New Holland Livestock Auction, one of the largest slaughter auctions in the Northeast. Not too many people know about the auctions. I certainly didn’t until my involvement with the team. Auctions at New Holland take place every Monday, starting around 10 a.m. and ending when all the animals have been sold. Approximately 500 animals go through the auction every week; large slaughter companies buy many and few are saved by rescues. Those bought for slaughter face a long road ahead. Because it is illegal to slaughter horses in America they are loaded into trucks headed for Canada or Mexico, many die along the way, and those who survive the trip will be slaughtered for human consumption overseas. Horses too thin for immediate slaughter are sent to feed lots to fatten up and then to the slaughter houses. Knowing the nightmares these animals face my team had to do something.

Bringing an animal into our lives isn’t a college-long commitment for my team, but a lifelong one. So you may ask yourselves how we came to this decision. One of our captains, Cristina Bakos, is not new to the rescue world. Her extensive volunteer work with an equine rescue brought her Storm, an off-the-track-Thoroughbred mare; Rango, an ex-Amish cart horse; a badly abused mule and three mini ponies. She and her family graciously agreed to help the team make our dream a reality.

Like every aspect of the sport, this took money. Raising money was truly a team effort headed by our fundraising officers: Christina Kotarski and myself. “I was so honored to be involved in raising money to rescue Hope. I, along with Christina C., created a Go-Fund-Me page as well as organized a campus bake sale. I was so excited and proud to witness so many friends, family members, faculty, and students come together to help us reach our goal of rescuing Hope. We couldn’t have done it without the continuous support and generous donations,” states Christina Kotarski. (Go-Fund-Me is an online crowd-funding program allowing people to raise money for many different events.)
Finally the day came to make the drive to Pennsylvania to bring Hope home. We did not have a specific pony in mind. We wanted a small mare, preferably healthy because even though we had money, we didn’t have enough to provide the quality care a sickly horse would have needed. So at 4 a.m. on the morning of Columbus Day we set off on what was one of the most emotional days I’ve ever witnessed. Captain Cristina Bakos, captain Alexandra Diez, our trusty driver, Mr. George Bakos, and myself set off on our three-hour drive. Arriving at the auction was like stepping into a whole new world. While driving through the town, we knew we were no longer on Long Island. We passed Amish girls riding their bikes in their traditional clothes and saw men driving horse-drawn carts. They all stared as we drove past with our massive pickup truck and trailer. We parked among the other trucks but not out of sight of the line of unmistakable slaughter trucks. Cristina had prepared us for what to expect but I wasn’t fully sure I was ready. I walked in with my oversized sunglasses to hide the tears.

It’s hard to explain how overwhelming it was. Three young women, clearly not from the area, drew some stares but we carried on—we were on a mission. Mr. Bakos went to get his bidding number and find a spot by the auction aisle. He did the bidding for us and ultimately was the one who purchased Hope for us. The day wouldn’t have been as successful as it was without him. When you walk into the different barns all you see are the rear ends of the animals. They are tied on a short rope to the wall with a small amount of hay in front of them. You hope you don’t get kicked as you walk by. A number of horses panicked and tried to escape. One such horse put in such an effort I wasn’t sure if I was more scared that he would break free or hurt himself in the process. His screams could be heard through the whole barn, and it was horrifying to think that a creature could be so scared that this was its reaction. One of the first barns we walked into had all different types of animals; from what was once a child’s show pony, to some Thoroughbreds that looked fresh off the track. “I found him!” Alex stated as we walked down the aisles. No one was there looking for a horse for themselves but Alex laid eyes on this one large pony and visions of him at the Hampton Classic, a local horse show, ran through her mind. Minutes later she was on the phone with her mom trying to rationalize how they could take care of another horse on top of the two her family already owned. Sadly, we couldn’t take him home but Alex made sure to brush the tangles out of his mane, feed him a few mints, and hope that another family could provide the love that she most definitely would have. Next, we walked through the working barn. This was one of the worst parts of the day. There were maybe 20–30 draft horses just standing there. These were truly gentle giants. The men walked by whipping them and they just stood there with a mix of sadness and love in their eyes. Most went to slaughter companies for $25 apiece.

Later in the day we met an incredible woman who bought one draft horse. As we were walking by, the draft horse made eye contact with Alex and wouldn’t stop staring. We went over to say hi and, with what looked like tears in his eyes, he rested his massive head on Alex’s shoulder. His new owner walked by saying that he was a love bug with a sweet tooth. Turns out this enormous draft horse liked to lick soda from the cap of the bottle. Alex said “It was beautiful to see how this animal, who had no reason to trust us, knew where to find love and I can only hope that that woman is still bringing love to his life, because I know he still loves her.”

Throughout the day, horses were coming and going so we had to keep walking around in case we missed one who wasn’t there before. That’s how we found Hope. She was tied next to an even smaller mini pony and they were both pressed up against the wall in fear of the angry Appaloosa next to them. We knew right away she was ours; she was this blonde little angel with warm eyes that calmly took in her situation with this attitude that said, “I can handle this.” Finally after waiting for hours for her to be led down the auction aisle they brought her out with the other mini she came with. Three hundred dollars later she was ours. It was incredible; we turned to each other with tears in our eyes, physically and emotionally exhausted but ecstatic that she was ours. Untying her halter from the wall was a liberating moment for me and I’m sure it was for Hope too. Now in the grand scheme of it all, saving one mini pony isn’t that big of a deal, but it has only taken this one mini pony to bring attention to her story and the horrors of the auction. We named her Hope to inspire others out there to work for a change, to bring ‘hope’ to a sad truth.

October 18, 2014 was LIU Post’s homecoming and we were blessed to bring Hope with us. After what was the craziest bath I’ve ever been a part of (it took five of us to bathe her), she was back to being her previous palomino self. We were a little nervous to how she would react to the crowd, but once she got there she got into the zone and was perfect. She let children come up to her—they gave her treats, took pictures, and played with her probably a little more aggressively than they should have. She was an angel through it all. The team, along with half the school … fell in love.

Christina is the fundraising officer of LIU Post’s Equestrian Team and a junior in the Honors program with a major in psychology and a minor in sociology.
Riders in grades 6-12 can compete with teams in the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA). School-age children, with various levels of experience, compete in Hunt Seat and Western disciplines throughout the school year. Riders not only compete for individual points, but for their team as well.

It’s fun and challenging – and there is no need to own a horse! The IEA is available to public or private schools and barn teams. Horses are provided to each rider at every event. All mounts are selected by a draw. Parents like that the IEA provides an affordable format for their child as he/she builds riding skills.

Many of our riders receive scholarships based on their performance throughout their IEA years.

Founded in 2002, the IEA has more than 11,000 members on 1,100 teams competing in hundreds of shows across the United States each year.

For more information, please call Jennifer Eaton, IEA Membership Coordinator, at 877-RIDE-IEA (877-743-3432) or Jenn@rideiea.org.
1. True.
2. 9 days and 23 hours.
3. Reining.
4. The average adult horse has a heart that beats 28-44 times per minute.
5. A horse can survive for 20-25 days without food, but only 3-6 days without water.
hen you’re riding in Africa and have an elephant charge you, you know you have an adventurous career. That’s what happened to me while exploring the Okavango Delta, the largest inland delta in the world, in the Southern African nation of Botswana. It’s an amazing place to ride, as you island-hop on horseback, swimming through channels carved out by hippos to explore uninhabited islands where giraffes, wildebeest, cheetahs, zebras and, yes, elephants roam and rule.

It’s one of the many exotic locales that I’ve had the privilege of exploring on horseback as part of my job. As the host, producer and creator of the Emmy-winning Equitrekking TV series, I travel the world by horseback, riding with local people to experience nature, history, culture and adventure. It’s a dream job that has taken me riding in the Middle East, Africa, South America, Europe, across the USA and beyond.

If you’ve ever gotten to ride on your travels or even taken a trail ride close to home, you know it’s a great way to explore a new place, getting you into nature to experience something unique. I love the adventure of riding different breeds in their native settings and the wonderful people and horses that I’ve met in my travels. I look forward to my daily work in producing Equitrekking’s TV shows, which allow other people who are curious about the world to come along for the ride, and also responding with passionate horse lovers all over the world in writing and creating Equitrekking’s websites.

When you travel on horseback, you can reach beautiful, natural places that many people won’t experience and get an intimate look at each destination. On almost every trip, I have to pinch myself, because I am having these once-in-a-lifetime experiences; like riding into the crater of a volcano on the island of Maui, or seeing the bright blue waters of the Dingle Peninsula from an old mass road on the top of a mountain in Ireland. I’ve cantered through the snow in Quebec, explored remote Waipi’o Valley, the Valley of the Kings, on the Big Island, where I picked fresh fruit right off of the trees and observed Hawaii’s only wild horse herd. I feel like a modern-day explorer blazing a fresh trail.

So, how, you might wonder, might someone have a job where they’re paid to be with horses? My job is just one of many jobs where you can spend time in the saddle. There are riding guides, equestrian instructors, dude ranch wranglers, horse photographers and more. My job didn’t exist before I created it, but combining my passion and skills, I was able to create my dream job and make it a success.
EQUITREKKING
Exploring the World on Horseback.
Starting my Dream Job … Equitrekking

Equitrekking isn’t something that I developed and was able to make a success overnight. It’s taken years of hard work, persistence and creativity to make it a hit, and it all started, oddly enough, in New York City. I was working in television production at CBS in Manhattan and wanted to combine my passion for horses and travel and do those things I love on a daily basis. Through riding, you can reach beautiful natural settings, spend time with horses, and meet local people—a great combination that I enjoy and knew others would find inspiring, too.

One of the unique things about Equitrekking is that in every destination that we visit, we ride the native breeds. We’ve ridden Highland ponies in Scotland, Icelandics in Iceland, Arabians in Jordan, Welsh Cobs in Wales and Quarter Horses in Colorado. The characteristics of these different breeds tell visitors a lot about the area and its history. People in each place have depended on horses throughout history, so it’s through horses that we discover each new destination and its people.

That’s the concept of what our small team at Equitrekking has worked to develop into a TV series, book, and various online websites at Equitrekking.com, EquitrekkingTravel.com and Top20Ranches.com, destinations where you can find and book horseback riding vacations, cattle drives, dude ranch escapes and beyond. The sites are meant to both inspire and have practical information, advice and resources. We publish a Travel Deals section, where you can get exclusive discounts on riding vacations, as well as an online guidebook to global riding vacations, ranches and also a new guide to horse camps for kids and parents. If you want to travel somewhere and ride, we want to provide you with the information and tools to get you there, because that’s what we’re passionate about.

It wasn’t easy to launch a TV show or business. I didn’t have a lot of money or big production credits. I did have a good idea, a passion for the subject and the ability to learn new things. My goal initially was just to get one episode of Equitrekking on a single PBS station. I started the show locally on PBS in New Mexico, where we garnered strong ratings, and grew it from there.

It’s taken a lot of hard work and a few years, but it’s been worth it to have these amazing riding adventures and get to share them with viewers around the world. As for my riding background, I certainly wasn’t and still am not an expert rider. What I am is willing to use my riding base, which is a hunter jumper background, to constantly try something new and take on challenges with a positive attitude. It’s actually similar to what IEA participants must do.

I have been riding since I was seven years old and first took riding lessons at summer camps in North Carolina. I’m from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. When I was growing up, we didn’t have a lot of access to horses or riding experiences. I would have loved something like the IEA when I was in school.

We recently filmed our 36th episode of Equitrekking. The series has been honored with three Daytime Emmy Awards, eight nominations and is broadcast not just on PBS in the USA, but on international networks in 83 nations, including France, Italy, Russia, China, New Zealand, Japan, the United Kingdom and beyond.

While Equitrekking is a lot of work, it’s also a lot of fun. Here are a few of my job’s perks, and some of the behind the scenes scenarios that I thought you might enjoy learning about.
**Equitrekking Job Perk: The Royal Treatment**

One of my most exotic adventures was riding in Jordan in the Middle East, where I trekked through the desert, riding Arabian horses with the Bedouin riders. While in Jordan, I also got the chance to interview Her Royal Highness Princess Alia at the Royal Stables, an once-in-a-lifetime experience. We filmed an awesome insider’s tour to see some of Jordan’s top Arabs and got insight into the stables’ founding family and the breed. The horses at the Royal Stables are beautiful. I heard stories that I’d never read about anywhere else and hearing the pride that the Jordanian people have for this special breed gave me a new appreciation for the Middle East and the Arabian horse.

**Equitrekking Job Challenges: Snakes, Scorpions and Saddles—Oh My!**

I’m out of my comfort zone quite often on my travels and riding adventures, as I’m constantly challenged with new horses, different tack and different riding styles in totally new and sometimes extreme environments.

In Uruguay, I rode in round stirrups on a very wide sheepskin saddle, which was challenging, especially when we took off at a fast gallop through wide-open fields. Adjusting to stirrups so long I almost lost them a few times in Iceland during a horse drive with Icelandic farmers also tested my ability to stay balanced in the saddle. Getting back in the saddle after a horse in Quebec tried to roll with me on the beach tested my confidence and ability to overcome a scary situation.

Traveling and camping in remote places brings with it perks, but also interesting stories. Deep in the jungle of Belize, dinner at our remote, eco-friendly lodge was interrupted by an emergency. A car screeched to a halt outside of the lodge and a man rushed out calling for a bush doctor. Someone who believed they’d been bitten by a poisonous snake was writhing inside of the car. Because the hospital was so far away, the driver wasn’t sure that his companion would survive the trip there and even if he did, there might not be anti-venom in stock. They needed a bush doctor to take them into the dark jungle to find a root, which when sucked on, slows the spread of the poison.

Well, that wasn’t the most enticing first night at this eco-lodge. I closed my mosquito net tight over my bed and hoped for a snake-free riding day. I was apprehensive about our jungle trek, even though it wasn’t my first brush with snakes on the road. They’d been visible at Petra in Jordan and invisible in the dark Jordanian Bedouin camp, where my flashlight showed tracks in the sand. I’ve had scorpions inhabit my shower in New Mexico, spiders in Uruguay, but knock–on-wood, our crew hasn’t yet been bitten. Maybe it’s the sound of the horse’s hooves on the ground that scares them away. I’d like to believe so!

**Top Adventures You Can Try**

In every episode of Equitrekking, we work to showcase destinations and adventures that are accessible to people all over the world, so that viewers can go and enjoy the same adventures they’ve seen me trying on TV.

There are many, many choices for destinations to saddle up for an hour, a day, a week or longer and great destinations where you can ride and your companions can either ride with you or experience other activities.

Mount Juliet, Castle Leslie, Killarney Riding Stables, and Willie Leahy’s Connemara Trail are just a few of the great places where anyone can saddle up in Ireland, including young riders and families. Each of these horseback riding vacations requires different skill levels, depending on what you want to do and the trip you choose. If you want to challenge yourself with an inn-to-inn horse ride along the craggy and dramatic Connemara coastline, you can go ride with Willie. If you are a beginning rider or getting back into the saddle after a while away, you might want to consider a vacation at somewhere like Castle Leslie, an eccentric and stunning castle with a great cross country course and a fun, virtual horse, or Mount Juliet, a beautiful estate where you can participate in clinics to brush up on your jumping skills or trail ride.

For more experienced riders, set your sights on Africa. Botswana has three amazing choices for riding and viewing wildlife. The riding can be challenging, as sometimes you will have to ride fast and also perhaps pop over a log or obstruction on the trails. Sometimes you’re not even riding on trails, like in the Okavango Delta, where you can literally trail blaze on horseback.

We’ve created a variety of online guides and resources to help you dream, plan and learn about ranch and riding vacations. On Equitrekking.com, you can search for dude ranches, guest ranches, cattle drives and global horseback riding escapes in the Equitrekking Vacation Guide and find exclusive deals on Equitrekking.com Travel Deals.

Top20Ranches.com is devoted to some of our favorite dude ranches throughout the U.S.A., Canada and Mexico. Equitrekking-Travel.com features select riding vacations and an equestrian travel agent to help match you with a vacation to fit you and your group.

When I first came up with this idea of riding around the world and filming it as a TV show, people seriously thought that I was crazy. It’s the kind of thing that folks would say, “you can’t make a living out of that.” With determination and creativity, I’ve turned an idea into a business and a career.

My advice to anyone who has a passion that they’d like to pursue for their job or in life is to go for it. You only live once and life surely does fly by.
Terresa Vanover had the ability to win the heart of both rider and parent during the very first riding lesson. Her patience, care, horse knowledge and teaching skill of how to groom, care, be safe, and walk around on what seemed a very tall horse to non-equestrian parents was immediately apparent.

Over the years, Terresa coached and trained many riders of all different riding skill levels, from little 5 year olds to know-it-all teenagers to adults. The same “Terresa patience” was shown to each and every rider. She met each student exactly where they were—from teaching a young rider how to pick hooves and helping them get mounted with the correct stirrup length to advising an impatient teenager to warm-up their horse, to showing another adult rider how to make themselves, as well as their horse, comfortable on the ride. Terresa’s concern for the safety and comfort of the horse, as well as the rider, was always visible.

In mid-2012, Terresa learned of the IEA—Interscholastic Equestrian Association. She deeply agreed with the goal of the IEA, which aims to expose many middle and high school students to horseback riding on the same level as football, baseball and soccer. With Terresa as the fearless leader and champion, we planned for over a year and registered our first IEA team as West Tennessee Riding Academy in August of 2013. Terresa was passionate about our kids competing in the IEA. The strength of her lessons and teaching quickly became apparent as some of our riders point placed in their very first show. In fact, at the first show of the 2014 season, every single rider on our team point placed—honoring our talented and devoted coach. Terresa went above and beyond her coaching duties to see that our team succeeded. She refused payment for her coaching at the competitions the first year because the team was so cash-strapped. She donated all sorts of things to benefit the team from hosting a fall carnival at the barn, to allowing the team to use her horses, tack, and facilities for a “Day at the Barn Fundraiser.” She planned trail ride fundraisers and pulled horses to middle Tennessee competitions—all for the sake of the team.

Looking back, we see all those barn lessons filled with patience, love of rider and horse, immense horsemanship knowledge, and kindred spirits. We see a woman who quietly exhibited her faith and taught our children well. Despite many trying situations with horses and riders, Terresa never raised her voice.

Great coaches teach great lessons. Some may seek or seem to become well known for success in the arena. But most of our team will never become famous equestrians. They will become teachers, lawyers, nurses, entrepreneurs, and parents. And that is where the real teachings of Ms. Terresa will impact our children. They will be the best at whatever they choose because of her love, guidance, patience, and the way she taught our children to keep trying until they excelled. She motivated them through her high expectations.

Billy Graham has been credited with stating that a coach can have more influence in one day than a pastor can have in a year. There are many things we forget in life, but we don’t forget our coaches. Ms. Terresa’s name will be remembered by her riders and her team; the way she affirmed you when you had the ride of your life, the way she affirmed you when you fell off the horse, how important you felt when you were trusted to completely tack up alone, and how valued you felt when you contributed to the success of the team.

Terresa Ann Vanover, age 55, of Humboldt, Tennessee, passed away Saturday, January 3, 2015 in Memphis, Tennessee. Terresa was the owner of Equine Acres Stables and the West Tennessee Riding Academy. She was also the City Recorder of Three-Way, Tennessee. She is survived by her husband of 36 years, Lee Vanover; her father, Earl Blackburn and wife Norma; two sons, Travis Vanover and Luke Vanover; two daughters, Lacie Carroll and Stephanie Bramlett; three grandchildren, Trevor, Lee and Arrington.

A Coach will help you deal with loss, And teach you how to win. She’ll take the riders that once were kids And turn them into equestrians.

A coach is like a teacher, Teaching many skills. Not only about the show of competition, But about the way life is.

A coach is like a friend. She’s right there by your side. In good times and bad times, In times you laugh or cry.

A coach is like a counselor. She listens every day. She helps you solve your problems, She knows the words to say.

A coach is like a doctor. She has to find what’s wrong. She has to make it better, So the horse and rider can move along.

A coach is like a guardian angel Watching over you each day and ride. She will guide you from within. She lives on in your memories and inside your heart.

We will never forget our awesome, irreplaceable Coach, Ms. Terresa Vanover.
USEF Luncheon

Photos taken at the USEF Annual Meeting where the Creekside Farm Team from Irmo, SC was honored at the President’s Luncheon as the “Leading Interscholastic Team of the Year.” The Creekside Farm Team won the Upper School Hunt Seat National Championship at the 2014 IEA Hunt Seat Finals.

L–R: Savannah Mattox, Chloe Taylor, Coach Emma Phillips, Head Coach Adrian Mack, Megan Whiting, Beverly Davis, Brooklin Kuipers
THE REVELRY FARM IEA TEAM IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE TWO OUTSTANDING RIDERS WHO ARE EXCEPTIONAL IN MANY WAYS.

BOTH GIRLS ARE STRONG TEAM LEADERS AND GREAT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IEA.

CASSIDY STARLING
Cassidy Starling, an original member of the Falcon Ridge Team, which has become the Revelry Farm Team, has been an IEA member since 2006. Now in her senior year at Blessed Trinity Catholic High School, Cassidy is looking forward to being a freshman at the University of Alabama next fall. Her former IEA coach, Simon Towns, reports that Cassidy is always busy participating in team activities as well as activities through her church and school. Cassidy spends her summers as a Girl Scout counselor sharing her love of riding with younger children. She has been an orientation leader at her school, a leadership group leader at school, student house captain, and student representative, all while maintaining a grade point average that makes the Honor Roll each marking period.

This past summer Cassidy was nominated to be part of Miss Georgia’s Outstanding Teen 2014. This prestigious program is designed to provide a full scholarship for the winner. While she did not win the competition, she was honored and pleased to have participated in the weeklong program. Cassidy said, “This program was able to showcase a life path of service, style, scholarship and success … the friendships formed during that week will last a lifetime.”

PAULA RUIZ
Paula Ruiz has also been a member of the Falcon Ridge Team and most recently the Revelry Farm IEA Team. She is always the first one to volunteer and the last one to leave. From her very first riding lesson, Paula has worked diligently to progress through the ranks to compete in the Open division. As a junior at Woodstock High School, she is Co-President of the environmental club, class representative to the Student Government Association, member of the Math/Academic Bowl Teams, Beta Club, Mayor’s Youth Council, and Science National Honor Society. She is also an active member in the school’s Technology Student Association, where Paula and her peers work on small engineering challenges throughout the year, and then enter multiple competitions with their solutions. She is a regular participant in the Georgia Science Fair and plans on taking a Georgia Technology distance calculus 3 class this spring.

Aspiring to put all this experience to good use, Paula is planning on a career in the field of engineering.

Paula was nominated, interviewed, and accepted into the Governor’s Honors Program, which is held each summer at Valdosta State University. The process is very selective and includes: nomination by a teacher, school interview, school nomination based on interviews, county level interviews, and the final interview at the state level. Paula spent four weeks last summer at Valdosta State. Mornings were spent working on activities in her selected major of biology. Afternoons were spent studying dance, her selected minor. “I will constantly push myself academically to challenge my mind and improve my skill set,” says Paula. Her coach says this is also her approach to riding as well.

Kudos to both girls on their many accomplishments in and out of the show ring!

Submissions for the next Leg Up column should be sent via email to Susan Wentzel at swentzel13@gmail.com.
Contest Winner

(Above) Submitted and taken by Sohela Dhillon. Sohela is a rider at Oakwood Manor Equestrian Team in Zone 2. “This photo means a lot to me. I took it at my very first horse show! The picture is of my sister, a helmet someone left lying around, one of the barn cats, and one of horses at the equestrian center at Alfred University. It represents some of the things I love most: my family, animals, and horseback riding.”

—Sohela Dhillon

(Above) Submitted and taken by Rebecca Sturm-Clauser. Pictured left to right: Olivia Deddens, Kaitlyn Shaw, Gabrielle Clauer, Mary Bradley Cassada and Emily Foster. “This photo is of five of our Upper School Team Members at the Chatham Hall show October 25. I am forever asking the team to take photos. They have labeled me their personal paparazzi and are great sports when we ask for so many shots. They play right up to the creativity and add their own flair. We are a small team and really enjoy meeting new people through the IEA. IEA is more than just riding. We are learning valuable lessons on new horses, meeting new people and building relationships that will last for years. These girls meet new riders and immediately cheer them on. I am proud to be a part of a team so dedicated to character building and IEA is a great vehicle to enforce such.”

—Rebecca Sturm-Clauser, IEA Contributing Member

(Above) Submitted by Hanneke Cole from Second Nature Farm in Zone 2. “Rosie, the lovely paint pony in the picture, has taught me a lot about jumping in my IEA practices. She has helped me become a more patient and confident jumper, and to really keep my shoulders back! I really enjoy riding her and she has a great personality.”

—Hanneke Cole
“I took this photo at Moss Creek Equestrian Center. This horse is named Maverick. I chose to take a picture of him because he is my favorite horse there.”  —Zoe Snyder

“I was really proud of this photo at the time based on every previous rider on Hope struggling and then having an extremely successful and competitive ride.”  —Julianna Gentile

“This is my favorite IEA photo of all time! This photo was taken at the Saddle Rowe IEA show last year and it is definitely one of my favorite shows to go to! This was the second of two consecutive IEA shows and I drew Chippy in both of them. He is by far my favorite pony that I have had the privilege of riding in IEA! I love this picture because it is at such a cool angle and I love the way the light hits me and Chippy in this shot.”  —Anna Bihiniak

“This photo was taken at Columbine Equestrian Center during my first trail ride with Graphite.”  —Courtney Binkley

“I took this photo at Moss Creek Equestrian Center. This horse is named Maverick. I chose to take a picture of him because he is my favorite horse there.”  —Zoe Snyder
(Above) Submitted by Maggie Yates from Mountaineer Equestrian Team in Zone 3.
“This photo was taken at my last show in North Carolina. It wasn’t my best show, but I got fourth place and now I have enough points to go to Zone Finals! This is my first year in IEA, and it’s helped me a ton because my family just moved five months ago from Utah to West Virginia and it’s helped me make new friends and spend more time with horses.” —Maggie Yates

(Above) Submitted by Hailey Todd of the Condee Farm Team in Zone 4 and taken by Dawn Summer. Pictured are best friends Lluvia Sommer, Hailey Todd and Mina Robinson from the Galaxy Farm show in Venice, Florida.

(Above) Submitted and taken by Molly Murtha of Wendover Equestrian Team in Zone 4.
“This photo of the sunset was taken after a long day of showing at Kimberden Farm in Ocala, Florida. It represents a little bit of the dedication IEA riders have to get up before the sun at 5 a.m. to watch the horses being warmed up, and to finish showing some times after the sun goes back down.” —Molly Murtha

(Above) Submitted and taken by Ashley Rogers of Stardust Farm Team in Zone 4.
“This photo was taken of a little black mare named Charlotte. My friend rode her in an IEA show for flat class and I thought she was just the cutest little pony. So I started taking a bunch of photos of her and this was one of my favorite photos.” —Ashley Rogers

(Above) Submitted and taken by Emma Pennell of Zone 4. Pictured are Caitlin Hooper, Carley Snidow and Emma Pennell.

(Above) Submitted and taken by Gillian Davis of RJ Pleasure Horses in Zone 3. Pictured in assistant coach, Marybeth Robertson and horse, Trump.

(Left) Submitted by Gillian Davis of RJ Pleasure Horses in Zone 3. "So last year I went to an IEA show in South Carolina and I rode a horse named Tank and he was amazing. He was so kind, never tried to buck or rear, never got upset. It was late at night and I forgot to bring my camera to the show. So this year I went to the same show and got pictures of him! (I even named my dog Tank because Tank the horse was so awesome.)" —Gillian Davis