

**Lillian Muzzy IEA Member #945412**  
**The Influence of Horses and Equestrian Competition**  
**IEA National Sportsmanship Award 2023**

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*“Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires,  
and a touch that never hurts.”* **Charles Dickens**

I was abandoned at birth by parents who did not have the resources to care for me, in a country that did not value girls. I was blessed to have been found and placed in an orphanage in DaoXian, China where I was cared for until adopted into my forever family at 9 months old. Although I was very young, the scars of an unanswered cry are not easily forgotten and leave a lasting mark. Horses have provided me with a healing balm that soothes old scars and allows me to love fully.

I first sat on a horse in 2014 on a family vacation. This was life-changing and since that time, horses have shaped me. Horses have taught me to be responsible because they rely upon me to exercise, feed, water, and care for them. I have learned to put my horses first. When I am done exercising them and before I can take care of myself, I need to cool them out, groom them, wrap or ice them, and return them safely to their stall. Time management is essential!

Riding and being a part of a barn and IEA team has provided me with opportunities to build friendships. The barn has expanded my world and my community. Regularly at shows I help our trainer set jumps for my teammates when they are in the warm-up ring. I love supporting my team in this way because I also get to learn from their experiences and feedback from the trainer. I almost always join my teammates on course walks to provide moral support, encouragement, and to learn with them.

Membership on the Chestnut Hills IEA Team has provided many volunteer opportunities! I have helped prepare for Region 1 shows by painting and repairing jumps, grooming horses, warming-up horses, and serving as a show volunteer and runner. I have earned the Sportsmanship Award each of these seasons because of my involvement in show preparation and horse care.

Supporting teammates at competitions sometimes means lifting them up when they are down or allowing them to lift you up when you are down. Showing and competing provides many emotional ups and downs and often these are learning opportunities versus pure victories.

The best part of Zone 10 Finals was arriving early and working with members of other teams to prepare the horse stalls in the pouring rain so that when teams arrived, they could quickly get their horses situated and comfortable. Together, our team opened 180 bags of shavings and bedded 45 stalls. It was so much fun working together and getting to know more riders in our Zone.

Horses have changed the way I live, the way I manage my time, and the person who I have become.