

CATER STABLES

Rising to the Top Through Team Work



David and Kristen Cater have applied themselves and built quite a training and teaching program in New Hampshire, in addition to giving back by serving on several association boards and committees.

by Sara Pizzuto

Sometimes life doesn't "cater" to your original plans. If one were to ask David and Kristen Cater what they initially wanted to pursue as a career, neither would respond with "horse trainer."

Kristen double majored in human resources and management in college, with the goal of obtaining a lucrative job and moving to Boston. David thought he was bound for veterinarian school.

However, life would proceed in a different direction. Both Kristen and David had an underlying passion for horses that they couldn't resist. This eventually led to the establishment of Cater Stables, and what is now a thriving and accomplished training facility.

Kristen Cater first climbed aboard a horse at the age of 11 in Gray, Maine. Annalisa Hall was the chosen instructor at her Mariways Stable. Equitation became Kristen's passion and she eventually began to show with Mike and Lisa Richardson at Cricket Hill Farm in New Hampshire. Her role as a student switched to that of an employee, as she ultimately started working for Mike and Lisa.

The University of New Hampshire soon came calling, and Kristen entered with the desire to pursue a non-horse related degree. Her hope was to have a financially sustaining career to be able to afford a fancy show horse. Lisa, however, thought otherwise and slowly convinced Kristen to re-evaluate her chosen career path upon graduation. She began to work at Cricket Hill full time and was soon hooked.

"After working full time in horses, I knew that I could never sit behind a desk and not be in a barn all day," she said.

Kristen began to develop her training skills at Cricket Hill thanks to the help of both Mike and Lisa, and the additional trainers she admired.

"I have always loved equitation, so I have looked up to Lillian Shively and all that she has brought to the world of equitation," she said. "Growing

up, I also loved to watch other trainers ride like Rob and Sarah Byers, and Scott and Carol Matton."

Kristen's ongoing work with the Richardson's naturally led to frequent trips to horse shows. She stumbled across a young man at one particular show who caught her eye. Months later, Kristen made the decision to bring him to her college's Christmas semi-formal, and years later, made the decision to accept his marriage proposal.

That man, David Cater, began his career with horses at the age of eight. Horses peaked his interest and he started taking lessons at a local barn that his family had found at a county fair. As his riding progressed, he made the switch to ride with Sandy Currier at Misty Hills Farm in upstate New York.

Jan Lukens' barn was David's next stop at the age of 16. He began working for her for the next six years while simultaneously earning a degree at the University of Massachusetts. He said that Jan's work ethic was something he always admired.

David's career progressed after his 2001 graduation when he accepted a job to work for Mike and Lisa Richardson. Though he initially had wanted to pursue a career as a vet, his direct work with horses helped to change his mind.

"When I graduated I continued to work with horses, and I couldn't really imagine my life without being able to work with them on a daily basis," he said.

Both David and Kristen were able to continue this work when they opened the doors to their own facility in 2006. The newly married couple welcomed clients to their Cater Stables in Dunbarton, New Hampshire.

The farm now has a booming business with 69 horses on the property, and 49 horses in training. David works a large majority of the horses, with help from Kristen and their assistants Murphy McSemek and Nason

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The Caters (seated center) have built their success on a great family atmosphere. At shows big and small, the Cater gang comes out in full force to support one another.

Bastarache. She additionally spends much of her time managing the operation and keeping things running smoothly.

Kristen helps the assistants work horses by watching and offering suggestions as they work. The team starts their mornings at 7 a.m. on the weekdays, and 6 a.m. on the weekends. They don't take lunch breaks, and work together to complete each task.

"Whether it's working horses, teaching lessons, or projects on an off-working day, we just start at the beginning and work until we're done," David said. "We try to let everyone cut out of the barn before five, but if we have more work to do they're really good about staying and completing the work. If we get done early then everyone leaves early. We wish that could happen more often."

The Caters' days are busy partly due to the multiple breeds that they train. American Saddlebreds, Morgans, and Hackney Ponies all call Cater Stables their home.

"I try to work them all similarly," David said. "But I would say that most of the Morgans have a little stronger opinion and sometimes you have

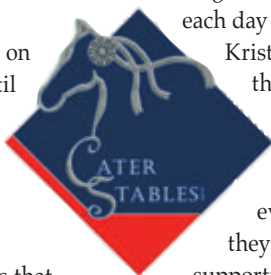
to make sure you are on the same page to be effective when you're working a Morgan. A Saddlebred is a little more sensitive, so you have to consider that when you're working them."

Kristen refers to herself as the ringleader of the circus, and is fully in charge of the organizational component of the barn. She writes lists to begin each day that the team then chips away at as the day progresses. Both

Kristen and David agree that this organization is the key to managing their hectic agenda.

"I try to stick to a schedule," Kristen said. "I think that's the only way we can get through our days and weeks. We have a lot of good help, and we try to create an environment where even though they are working hard and long hours, I hope that they're enjoying what they do. We have amazing clients that are very supportive of both our help and each other, so that helps a lot. We could not do what we do without our entire team."

Another Cater team member, Cate Lynch, has recently joined the farm as an assistant instructor. Kristen and Cate teach close to 120 lessons per week, including both the academy and show riders. Between 30-35 of those



Kristen and David branched out and added Morgans to their training program some five years ago, directing Lauren Foy and Epona's Mo 'O Lio GCH to the World Champion Amateur Hunter Pleasure honors. Fast-forward to 2017 and the Caters directed Lila Tatar (pictured) to the same world champion title.



David won his first personal world's titles this year taking the World's Champion ASR Four-Year-Old Three-Gaited Sweepstakes and the Reserve World's Champion of Champions Junior Three-Gaited honors with Heather Walston's Bluebonnet's Hip Hop.

weekly lessons are for academy riders, while the remainder pertain to those who show. Most of the show riders come twice a week to train. They typically ride a lesson horse on the first day, and then both a lesson horse and show horse the second day.

Equitation lessons encompass a large part of Cater Stables, with many successful riders emerging from Kristen's program.

"I love equitation, so I think if they decide they want to ride equitation with me, they come with their own drive and motivation," Kristen said.

The equitation riders have a similar training program to the other show riders, but often come and stay longer at the barn. They help Kristen with the lesson horses and are allowed extra rides in exchange for their assistance. Lunge lessons with strength exercises are a large part of their regime, with workout lessons and pattern lessons included.

Lessons on the individual riders' show horse are strictly private, to allow for the rider to work on specific details and apply what they have practiced on the lesson horses. However, many times the riders will participate in giant group lessons to help with ringmanship and horsemanship.

"I think they motivate each other when riding together, and that's partly why they learn to be so successful," Kristen said.

Molly Codeanne is one of those successful



You don't see Kristen in the ring often. About every three years she makes an appearance and this year she won the World Champion Hunter Pleasure title with Lila Tatar's Epona's Mo 'O Lio GCH. It was the second time Kristen has won this class with Lio.

equitation superstars that have grown up in the Cater Stables program. She has achieved world and national accolades with CH-EQ Chianti's Prayer, including being named the 2016 Senior Saddle Seat Equitation World's Champion of

Champions as well as placing reserve in both the UPHA Challenge Cup and USEF Medal Finals. Molly explained that Kristen and David create an extremely hard working, yet fun environment at their barn.

"They want nothing more than to see you succeed, and will do most anything to help you accomplish your goals," she said. "They are a fantastic team, and work together to bring out the best in all of their riders. While riding with Kristen and David, I have formed a bond with them and I am so grateful for our relationship. They have helped to make 'Button' and I a team."

David and Kristen also helped Molly become a team with another successful American Saddlebred this year. Ashlee Wheaton handed over the reigns of CH Extremely Fortunat to Molly for the season, and the two have made lasting impression in the ring.

Molly and Extremely Fortunat were victorious in Freedom Hall this year, leaving with the blanket of the roses as the 2017 Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure World Champion of Champions.

The Cater team was also extremely fortunate to have an entire string of show horses make victory passes on the green shavings this year.

"We had our best year yet at Louisville," David said. "We had eight different horses win. But not only that, we had a few first timers that came far beyond our expectations in their first



The association of the Caters and the Foy family has been a good one. Sara (with roses) won two world championships with BRMF Lalani's Fireball GCH, Kate (to the right of Sara) won a world's champion of champions title with Soquili's Curious George, and Lauren (far right) won a World Champion Amateur Hunter Pleasure title with Epona's Mo 'O Lio GCH.

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Kristen and David directed Audra Pike to several Oklahoma titles this year: World Champion 13 & Under Saddle Seat Equitation, UPHA Morgan Junior Challenge Cup National Champion and Grand National Champion 13 & Under Saddle Seat Equitation. Audra was riding CN's Stylish Debut who took Kasey Saccoccia to last year's AMHA Gold Medal Saddle Seat National Finals, also under the direction of the Caterers.



Cater Stables enjoyed great success at Louisville over the past few years. Amanda Murchison (far left) and Cathy Rogers-Holmes have won the World's Champion of Champions Adult Show Pleasure and World's Champion of Champions Adult Show Pleasure Driving titles the past two years. Molly Codeanne was the 2016 World's Champion of Champions Senior Saddle Seat Equitation rider. She came back this year to win the World's Champion of Champions Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure roses with Ashlee Wheaton's CH Extremely Fortunat.

year, enough so that they were also able to go and compete there."

Two of those winning Louisville entries were CH Spread the Word with Amanda Murchison, and CH Who paired with Cathy Rogers-Holmes. Both of these big bays defended their 2016 world championships, with Spread The Word laying claim to the Adult Three-Gaited Show Pleasure division, and Who rising to the top of the Adult Show Pleasure Driving division.

David explained that both of these undefeated champions represent the epitome of what their respective divisions look for.

"They have wonderful personalities, big hearts, and love to perform," he said. "I find if a job is easy for a horse, it's easy for them to be great at the job we're asking them to do. Both of these horses love what they do, and it's easy for them to do their job. Therefore, they love performing."

In addition to their winning Saddlebreds, Kristen and David are also in charge of a slew of Morgan horses. When the Foy family first came to Cater Stables, they brought their Morgans with them. One of those horses was Lauren Foy's hunter Epona's Mo'O Lio. Neither Kristen nor David had previously trained a hunter, but they were accommodating to Lauren nonetheless, and worked diligently to learn the new division. Their work paid off as Epona's Mo'O Lio earned both amateur and open hunter pleasure world championship titles under the direction of the Caterers.

"It speaks to their can-do attitude and enthusiasm for the sport that they were so enthusiastic about bringing on an entire new division for us," Lauren said.

Lauren will now return to the Morgan Grand National with a new winning hunter. Ledyard's Mysterious Prince made the swift transition from the park saddle to the hunter pleasure division last year. Lauren credits the entire Cater Stables team for her success with this young horse.

"There is always something to learn each time we leave the show ring," Lauren said. "David and Kristen are there through the good rides to teach us

confidence in our ability and our horses while giving us a goal for the next ride to be better, and through the not-so-good rides to walk us through each step to make sure we can learn for next time. I have certainly had rides in the past that have been far less than perfect and rather than dwell on the mistakes, Kristen and David are always there to talk me through the ride and create a constructive plan for the next one."

Sara Foy, Lauren's mother, has achieved her own winning record with her Morgan BRMF Lailani's Fireball. Sara and "Boo" will arrive in Oklahoma this year as the reigning two-time English Pleasure Ladies Amateur World Champions.

Kate Foy is the third member of the Foy family to be successful under the Cater Stables banner. Kristen and David allowed Kate the opportunity to begin riding Saddlebreds, and embraced this challenge with avidity. Kate has since made victory passes in both the three-gaited and five-gaited divisions, including being named the Ladies Amateur Three-Gaited World's Champion of Champions with Soquili's Curious George.

"It would be an understatement to say that our time with Cater Stables has been great so far," Lauren said. "It's been an amazing time and we are all looking forward to many more years, horses and fun times with the team."

Those fun times will keep rolling for Cater Stables, as the barn still has numerous important horse shows left on their 2017 calendar. Following the Morgan Grand National, David and Kristen will take their clients and horses to Mane Event, Octoberfest, with the final stop at the American Royal. Some of their 2016 champions look to defend their titles, and Molly Codeanne will make her final quest for triple crown glory in her last year of equitation.

"We are lucky to have had a remarkable season so far, and I hope it continues this fall," Kristen said.

It is evident that through David and Kristen's diligent work, passion, and the way they "cater" to their clients and horses, they will continue to excel in the seasons to come.

