



Judy Dettore and Ideal One

USHJA Foundation Gochman Family Grant Creates Memories and Friendships

It's no SPAM! Three pony riders discovered dreams do come true.

By Megan Lacy

When Riley Hogan first heard she'd received an email inviting her to compete in the US Pony Finals, presented by Collecting Gaits Farm, her first thought was that it was SPAM, otherwise known as an unsolicited electronic message.

Hogan couldn't believe her ears as her godmother read aloud the email. Indeed, it wasn't SPAM, which was confirmed by Steve Rosenberg, USHJA Foundation coordinator, who had the privilege of calling each of the three recipients of this year's Gochman Family US Pony Finals Grant to confirm the good news.

Hogan recalled the phone call from her godmother, Jocelyn Lee Alexander, who had nominated her for the grant: "She said, 'Repeat after me: Read the congratulations email!'"

Hogan, 13, of Warrenton, Virginia, joined Judy Dettore, 14, of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and Cecillia Machado, 12, of Reading, Pennsylvania, for the US Pony Finals.

In 2015, the USHJA Foundation launched a grant to help one child, Matthew Bravo, get to the US Pony Finals. Thanks to the generosity of the Gochman family and the excitement around the inaugural grant, the grant helped three young riders attend this year's US Pony Fi-

nals, held at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington.

Each rider was awarded funds to help with the costs associated with the event and was provided with a qualified pony, if necessary. Dettore and Machado accepted the ponies provided to them, while Hogan competed on her own qualified pony.

The girls trained with Charlie Moorcroft, of Wellington, Florida, and Rob Jacobs, of Aberdeen, North Carolina, while they were at Pony Finals. Moorcroft and Jacobs ensured that the grant recipients received the full experience—meeting numerous other pony riders, walking the courses, participating in clinics and, of course, showing.

They also took a trip to Lane's End Farm, a famed Thoroughbred facility owned by the Farish family. Fellow pony rider Daisy Farish led their tour of the farm and introduced them to some of the stallions.

While competing was the highlight for each of the girls, they noted that the friendships they made among each other



KRISTIN ROVER

From left, USHJA Foundation Funds Development Director Bill Rube with Riley Hogan, Cecillia Machado, Judy Dettore, USHJA Foundation Board President Jennifer Burger and the girls' awards.

MEGAN LACY

and with other kids would be long lasting. The mothers of the girls also bonded over the experience of watching their children compete at their first US Pony Finals.

All of the girls described the experience of being notified as amazing, but at that point, they only had an inkling of what the trip would entail.

Judy Dettore

Dettore started riding at age 6. She typically rides young, green ponies and owns her own 5-year-old large green pony that isn't quite ready for Pony Finals. She works at her local barn to pay off board and rides at another local barn to help with sale ponies. She competes mostly in the pony hunters at local shows, including year-end hunter and medal finals, with an occasional rated show.

"This went past my expectations," said Dettore of Pony Finals and the grant. "It was super fun because there was always something to do. I got to do so many cool things. It was good to meet new people, and I love the show grounds. It was all just so much fun!"

Dettore rode Ideal One, owned by Linda Smith-Faver, in the Large Green Pony section. The pair had the distinction of holding onto the number-one spot when they walked out of the ring from the Over Fences phase, eventually finishing 21st. Dettore and Ideal One placed 31st out of 82 ponies overall. Dettore noted that riding Ideal One was the high point of her experience.

"She's the bravest pony I've ever ridden," she said. "She wasn't spooky at all. Charlie Moorcroft and Rob Jacobs gave me pointers. I just really had to get her going; she was easy once

I got her going."

Riding wasn't the only great part of the experience, though. Her mother, Amy Dettore, talked about the camaraderie among the girls.

"I think it was very bonding for them," she said. "They were there together as a group. I know personally it was really nice to have other moms there experiencing what I was experiencing. It was nice to see the girls cheer each other on and watch each other. It was great to meet new people and make new friends."



STEVE ROSENBERG

Daisy Farish, second from right, gave Cecillia Machado, Riley Hogan, and Judy Dettore a tour of her family's Lane's End Farm in Lexington.

Riley Hogan

Hogan has been riding all of her life with her family, cousins and neighbors. She foxhunts with her brother and mother, who groom and exercise hunt horses, making foxhunting attainable for her family. Horses are in her blood.

For her, the Pony Finals experience was something she'd been wanting for some time, and she couldn't have been more excited to show her own My Shooting Star. It made the entire experience even more special.

Hogan competed in the Large Green Pony section at Pony Finals and finished 52nd out of 82 entries.

"I was so happy with how good my pony was," said Hogan, who has been working him since he was 5 and foxhunts him regularly.

"Thank you to the Gochmans for this amazing opportunity, and the USHJA and Charlie Moorcroft and everyone who was part of the grant," she said, noting there were so many people involved in making the experience as special as it was. "It was way more than what I expected. It was amazing!"

Hogan made fast friends

with the other girls and invited them to come foxhunting in Virginia. They haven't set a date, but they are all looking forward to staying in touch and the opportunity to get together again.

"It's been incredible," said her mom, Sara Hogan. "It's so fun to see them grow as competitors and as riders and just as people. And it's really neat to see their hard work pay off."

Cecillia Machado

Machado is the third of six children and has been riding since she was 3. She's dreamt of Pony Finals since she was 6 and talked about Pony Finals on a daily basis.

She rode Silver Star Dynamo, a gray Welsh cross owned by Moorcroft that goes by "Spanky" around the barn. "I was nervous when I first got on him," said Machado. "But he was really good and a lot of fun to ride."

Machado showed Spanky in the Medium Pony Hunter section, where he placed 118th out of 168 ponies overall.

"Pony Finals was better than I could have expected," said Machado. "The most exciting thing was making new friends and showing!"

Her mother, Amy Machado, added, "The girls hit it off right from the beginning. And the other moms were great. I often find it tough to talk to other moms, but I look forward to having lifelong friends in them. Every time one of the girls walked into the ring, I felt like it was one of my own kids going in."

"I'm just so thankful the grant even exists," she continued. "It exceeded any expectation that was there. Everything was just great! The way Charlie deals with the kids was amazing... and Rob was fantastic. It was just such a wonderful experience."

Each of the girls took home priceless memories and gifts donated by Charles Owen Inc., Signature Spurs, Dever Golf Carts, Essex Classics, Personalized Products, Rob Jacobs and RLJ Stables, Shapley's, Smart-Pak, The Clothes Horse and *The Plaid Horse*. Meadowbrook Horse Transportation, Inc., donated transportation for the ponies, as well.

For more information about the USHJA Foundation and the Gochman Family US Pony Finals Grant, please visit www.ushjafoundation.org. 