



GREAT THINGS AHEAD FOR Southern Legacy Stables

By Erica Faulkner

Only a few years have gone by since Caitlin and Chris Jarriel opened Southern Legacy Stables in Allenhurst, Georgia, and they have already experienced a magnitude of success. Caitlin grew up with horses and operating a show stable has always been one of her dreams. Although Chris did not grow up with horses, his interest was perked after meeting Caitlin. Together, these two have built an incredible operation in just a short time.

Caitlin is a fighter, a survivor, a true miracle. She overcame a life-threatening issue at birth, fighting for her life for four and a half months in the hospital.

"When I was told the story of my birth, I felt like I had been given a second chance at life and was determined to make the most of it and bring the most good to the world that I could," she said.

She grew up in the small Georgia town, Jesup, just as her parents did. Her father was a second-generation physician and her mom ran a successful dance studio. When Caitlin was born, her mother left her dance studio career in favor of being a full-time mom.

Caitlin's mother was terrified of horses. But that did not stop her from supporting her daughter's love for them. She made sure that Caitlin had the opportunity to ride and when Caitlin was three-years-old, she climbed aboard her very first horse. By the time she turned six, Caitlin was hooked and committed to all things horses. Riding became a part of her weekly activities, no exception.

She was fortunate to learn from a variety of trainers at different barns all across Georgia. Dixie Stables, Wildwood Stables, Oak Lane Farm, Sea Island Stables, Imagine Nation Horseworks, Red Oak Stables, and Brian Reimer Stables, all played a part in the foundation of Caitlin's career. It was during her time at Dixie Stables under the tutelage of Lynn Pace that Caitlin was given the opportunity to turn her dreams into reality and open her very own training stable.

Pace opened her farm Dixie Stables in 1978. For over 40 years, Pace has taught people of all ages to ride, show, and fall in love with the American Saddlebred. Caitlin's journey began with Pace when she was thirteen, and through the years that followed they have created a lasting relationship and made many memories, both in and out of the show ring.

"I was riding at Sea Island Stables with Marvin Long when I met Lynn," Caitlin said. Coincidentally Marvin Long instructed Pace



Chris and Caitlin share a moment with Anna Beasley, one of the riders that they have coached to many blue-ribbon rides in the performance and equitation divisions.



Chris is always on hand to lend Caitlin a hand, or offer up some last-minute encouragement to the riders from Southern Legacy before they hit the show ring.

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In 2017, just one year out of the academy ranks, Emily Egner earned a good ribbon her first time on the green shavings, and was also named the Saddle and Bridle Pleasure Equitation Junior Medallion Reserve National Champion.



Chris can be seen in the show ring himself from time to time. Here he shows his own horse, Silk's Fine Art.



Sarah Tirpak aboard Santa Cruz and Ann Eaker aboard Glendale's Daisy Belle winning Hunter Champion and Reserve Champion honors, displaying Caitlin's ability to instruct riders in any discipline.

when she was just a young girl, just as he eventually instructed Caitlin. Over the years Marvin's daughter, Amy, stepped up to help at the stables and eventually became Caitlin's primary teacher.

"I looked up to Marvin Long and his daughter Amy. They were my first role models," Caitlin said. "When I became Lynn's student at Dixie Stables, she became a role model for me as well."

Caitlin's first time in a show ring was aboard a mare named "Missy" at the Dixie Stables Spring Show. At that moment it was more than being hooked, Caitlin knew she had found her passion; she knew horses would be a part of her life forever.

The first few horses that Caitlin had the privilege of riding and showing were hers through lease agreements, which is a great way to get newcomers into the business. It did not take long and in 1999 she acquired her first horse, a pretty bay mare named Storm On The Rise. On The Rise, or "Storm" as Caitlin calls her, was born in 1996, making her just a three-year-old when Caitlin took ownership. A young child and a young horse are not the ideal situation for everyone, but for Caitlin, it was perfect. From those early years when she had to fight for her life, she made up her mind that she was going to accept any challenges that life threw at her; nothing was going to stand in her way of living an incredibly fulfilling life. Caitlin knew she had been given a second chance at life, and thus was going to make the most of every

opportunity throughout the rest of her life. As a result, learning to ride a young horse when she was just a kid herself, was just one of life's challenges, one that she confidently conquered.

Caitlin and Storm competed all over the country campaigning in the country pleasure division; learning and growing together as a team. Their career began in 2000, with the most memorable show for Caitlin being the 2002 Pro-Am Charity Horse Show. The team put on two great performances to win both the Country Pleasure qualifier and the Country Pleasure Championship. Although there are many things that this team accomplished in their time together, Caitlin is particularly proud that she equitated this young horse all on her own.

Over the years other horses came into Caitlin's life including Miss Gotrocks, Champagne's Supreme Fox and Kerouac, among others.

Pace told Caitlin at an early age that she needed to attend college, get a job and then get back into the horses if she saw fit. Following her role model's advice, Caitlin graduated from Mercer University summa cum laude with a degree in International Financial Management and a second degree in Economics. She studied abroad in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Brazil, and Wales.

She recalled some of her favorite memories from those years.



Caitlin with her riders Emily Egner and Anna Beasley

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"My favorite moments while studying abroad would have to be piranha fishing in the Amazon River, visiting the Spanish School of Riding in Austria, and seeing the Eiffel Tower on a weekend trip to Paris."

While living abroad and studying International Business at the University of Wales, she traveled Europe, experiencing what life outside of horses could be like. After graduating college, Caitlin began a career in Risk Management as an officer for The Heritage Bank. While she loved her job, Caitlin did not feel as though she was doing what she was meant to do. She just could not help but feel her calling involved horses. With the unknown ahead, Caitlin took action making a career change fulfilling a little girl's dream.

Chris, Caitlin's husband, had also made a career move at that time, leaving his job at Gulfstream to work full-time at his own business, Jarriel Lawn LLC. While formulating her next steps, Caitlin helped Chris with his lawn business for a short time. Knowing Caitlin was available, one of her instructors came calling. Pace wanted Caitlin to work at Dixie Stable with Pace full-time; Caitlin accepted the job and never looked back. She learned the ropes of the business from Lynn. She also traveled to other training facilities watching their daily operations. Still to this day, Caitlin visits any number of different farms, always learning new things that she might like to try at her place. Tailoring what she learns from others, to fit her farm's needs, is an important part of Southern Legacy's foundation and future.

Of all the places she has visited, Mercer Springs was a favorite. "Smith (Lilly) is truly exceptional," she said. "He is an exceptional horseman and businessman. I am so thankful he allowed me to come visit and watch his daily operations. I consider all of my visits to be 'Continuing Education Credits.' With other jobs, continuing your education is required. I believe it is something we all should do in the horse industry."

Soon it was time for Caitlin to put to use all the insight and education she received by watching and working for other trainers. It was January 1, 2015, when Pace passed the Dixie Stables' torch to Caitlin, and the next chapter began to unveil.

It was not just the beginning of a new year but also the beginning of new venture for Caitlin. Southern Legacy Stables was born. Operating out of the same facility that housed Dixie Stables, Caitlin commented that she renamed the farm to honor Pace and to continue to bring forth all the good that Pace has contributed to the industry; Pace, in Caitlin's eyes, is a true southern legacy.

Caitlin was not alone in this venture. Her husband Chris stepped up to the plate to support his wife in all her dreams, and with his help Southern Legacy Stables quickly became a household name in the South. Day in and day out Chris has stood by Caitlin's side, adding his own personal touch to Southern Legacy Stables.

Chris, also a Georgia native, grew up in McIntosh County, and spent his younger years enjoying all the coast had to offer. His father operated a shrimping business and his mom was a banker, and in later in life became a school teacher. Ironically enough, Chris's mom worked for Caitlin's uncle while pregnant with Chris.

Baseball was Chris's sport of choice. It was a sport he excelled at playing while growing up. He played throughout high school until he was sidelined during his senior year after suffering a rotator cuff injury. His injury unfortunately brought his baseball career to an end, but Chris did not let the setback deter him. Was he sad to no longer be able to continue on with a sport he loved? Well, of course. Was he about to let it define him and ruin his outlook on the rest of his life? Absolutely not.

Chris is a level-headed guy, and he possesses the ability to see the greater good in almost everything, so the disappointment of his injury was only temporary. Chris brings his outlook on life to the barn each and every day, helping to instill in the customers a feeling of self-worth and pride. Most importantly he understands there is a lot more to this than just the color of the ribbon.



Lynn Pace congratulated Caitlin on winning the Dewey Henderson Sportsmanship Award at Pro-Am Charity.



Caitlin warms up *The Spotlight Kid*, one of Southern Legacy Stables performance horses.

Chris graduated from McIntosh County Academy. He spent his undergraduate career at Georgia Southern University earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration followed by a master's degree also in Business Administration. It was summer before his senior year of college that he met Caitlin. Both of them consider the day of their first date be their luckiest day of their lives. Prior to meeting Caitlin, Chris had been around horses while riding at his great grandfather's farm. It was the introduction to the American Saddlebred, however, that really sparked his interest. Caitlin watched him take his first ride aboard a tall chestnut Saddlebred named Scrap Iron. He was a natural right from the start she said.

In 2007, Chris was on hand to watch Caitlin win the first ever UPHA Horsemanship Challenge, and the excitement from that event sealed the deal for him. Like Caitlin, he was hooked. He knew horse shows and the American Saddlebred would be part of his, and Caitlin's, lives forever.

Chris spends most of his time running his own successful commercial and residential landscaping company, Jarriel Lawn LLC. A thriving business, it keeps him busy and working hard. When he does have some down time, he quickly steps in to help assist Caitlin with the running of Southern Legacy Stables. Chris pointed out that the nice thing about owning his own business, is that he can easily schedule time off to be able to accompany Caitlin to horse shows.

Caitlin and Chris have worked hard to create an atmosphere at Southern Legacy Stables that is

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all inclusive and welcoming to anyone, no matter the discipline or desire to compete. From the recreational rider who enjoys riding once a month, to the first-time academy rider, to the skilled national champion, riders of every ability and skill level can be found at Southern Legacy.

Caitlin has her sights set on the future of her farm and even though that “vision, of where the farm is going, is continuously changing and diversifying, (she) still feels that (their) number one goal remains the same: to bring new customers into this industry and create an environment that will help them grow and challenge them in a way that they will continue to stay involved in the sport as long as possible,” she said.

And bringing new people into the industry is exactly what Southern Legacy is doing. The clientele continues to grow with an average increase of one or two new riders into the lesson program every week. And so far, so good, in regard to maintaining a level of diversity within the barn. Over the last five years since the barn opened its doors, Caitlin has instructed riders to blue ribbon victories in every division. Emily Egner is a shining example of the different levels of riding that Caitlin is capable of teaching.

Egner began her career under the Southern Legacy banner in 2015 when the barn opened. At that time Egner was successfully competing in the academy walk and trot divisions. In 2016 she moved into the canter classes, and then in 2017 made a smooth transition out of academy graduating into the equitation division. During Egner's first year of showing in the equitation division, she took home victories from Blue Ridge Classic Horse Show and Dixie Cup. She even made her first trip to Louisville and bringing home good ribbons from the extremely competitive junior



Caitlin shows off her versatility winning the Opportunity Hunter Pleasure Stake at Southeastern Charity in 2016 aboard *For Those Who Wait*.

equitation division. If that is not impressive enough, she also took home the Saddle and Bridle Pleasure Equitation Junior Medallion Reserve National Champion honors later in September. In 2018 she added wins from J.D. Massey Classic and Jubilee Of Breeds to her list of honors. Her resume grew as she was named Lexington Junior League's Pleasure Equitation 13 and Under Reserve Champion and claimed the yellow ribbon in both the UPHA Pleasure Challenge Cup Junior Finals and the Saddle and Bridle Pleasure Equitation Junior Medallion Finals.

From the junior riders to the adults, Caitlin can handle them all, as she has exemplified with her student Rachel Griffis. Griffis rode with Caitlin while at Dixie Stables and when Caitlin opened her own barn Griffis stayed with her. Caitlin knew that Griffis always had a goal of winning a top ten at a national final, and she was committed to making that dream come true. In 2016 these two worked together to turn that dream into a reality. Caitlin teamed her first with Cabernet's Will Command, and later with Unchaperoned. Between these two horses, Griffis took home top ten places in the USEF Adult Saddle Seat Medal National Finals and the UPHA Adult Challenge Cup National Finals

in 2016, and then in the Challenge Cup Finals again in 2018.

The current focus at Southern Legacy is on amateur and juvenile riders, however that does not mean there are no plans to expand into other areas of the industry. Over the past two years, they have begun testing the waters in the breeding world and have two foals already on the ground, *A Royal Legacy* and *Tango's Southern Kiss*,

Chris and Caitlin bring a fresh perspective to the industry by mixing “old school” and “new school.” With a customized approach to her training program, Caitlin believes you cannot rest on your laurels. It is not about just showing up; you have to give it your all every day.

To continually improve her show string, Caitlin feels “one of (her) favorite parts of (her) job is teaming riders and horses together.” It is her mission to find each of her riders a perfect match. During the shopping and purchasing process for a client, Caitlin tries to “manage the transaction as if it were (her) money.” She believes the most important thing is to “look for the best fit for (the client's) budget.”

Success has come quickly for Southern Legacy Stables during their startup. Caitlin been named High Point Trainer since going into business for herself by the American Saddlebred Horse Association of Georgia. Caitlin and Chris are thankful for their amazing clients and the opportunity to work with such talented horses and riders. They look forward to continuing their growth and success for many years to come.



Simply Nanette and Samantha Nelson were a winning combination in the junior exhibitor country pleasure division under Chris and Caitlin's instruction.