

The Iowa based Blue Meadows Farm first opened its doors to the public in March. The training facility is the newest venture for young trainers Nick Kinsinger and Lauren Brannon.

# BLUE MEADOWS FARM OPENING

BY SARA PIZZUTO

**W**ith the tumultuous 2020 year behind us, two young Saddlebred trainers began the new year with a new training operation. Nick Kinsinger and girlfriend Lauren Brannon joined forces and opened the doors to their Blue Meadows Farm in March. Their new Iowa based facility specializes in developing champion American Saddlebreds as well as Hackney Ponies and caters to both amateur and junior exhibitor riders.

Kinsinger and Brannon both had an early introduction to horses. Kinsinger's father worked for various Saddlebred and Hackney training barns, which allowed Kinsinger to grow up showing Hackney Ponies and Shetlands. He then began working for Roger Lucas during the summers while in high school.

"Growing up as a kid I always wanted to train horses, but never really thought it would be possible," Kinsinger said.

That was until he graduated from Iowa State University and received a call from Anna Marie Knipp. Kinsinger's dreams of training horses came to fruition, as Knipp offered him a job working for her as well as Jimmy Miller at her High Spirits Farm. Kinsinger worked alongside Miller at High Spirits Farm for seven months until Miller's unfortunate passing. His death prompted Kinsinger to gain additional responsibilities around the farm.

"I was put in charge of making sure the farm ran smoothly, fixing or taking care of anything needed," Kinsinger said. "While working at High Spirits I got to work beside Nicole Harrison and Robert Gardiner learning different training techniques."

Kinsinger's training journey would soon bring him next to Bob and Tonya Brison's Missouri based Fairview Farms, where he remained for eight years. He credited the Brisons for helping him learn how to start and develop young horses and ponies. While at Fairview, Kinsinger earned his first personal world's title last year with one of those youngsters, Heartland Jameson. He drove the entry to be named the Four-Year-Old Road Pony World's Champion as well as the Junior Road Pony Reserve World's Champion of Champions. Jameson then concluded the 2020 show season as the UPHA Road Pony Classic Reserve Grand Champion at the American Royal, once again with Kinsinger in the bike. Both Tonya and Bob Brison greatly enjoyed having Kinsinger as part of their Fairview Farms team.

"Nick was always a hard worker and was a good team player," they said. "He was always there if you needed him."

Kinsinger's girlfriend, trainer Lauren Brannon, also learned under the tutelage of Bob Brison. In addition, her family's steep history in the Saddlebred and Hackney industry helped fuel her passion for training and her chosen career path.

Brannon grew up as the daughter of trainer Rocky Brannon and granddaughter of the late UPHA Hall Of Fame trainer Sam Brannon. She spent her childhood riding at her father's barn outside of St. Louis,

Missouri, and amassed a widely successful career in both the equitation and performance divisions.

"I've been riding since I could walk," she said. "I was fortunate enough to start in leadline, then academy, and then got to ride and show any horse I could as I grew up."

She explained that following in her family's footsteps as a horse trainer was something that appealed to her.

"I've always loved being involved in the industry," she said. "Teaching lessons, introducing new people to the breed, and helping people reach their goals, whether it be with a show horse or just for fun has always been something I've enjoyed."

Brannon credited her father as well as Bob Brison for being influential in allowing her to hone her talents as a horse trainer.

"Always being in the barn as I grew up, I learned a lot from my dad where I got to help with lessons, camps, horse shows, and working horses," she said. "I also worked for Bob Brison where I got to teach lessons and learn a lot about preparing horses for amateurs and young horses."

Brannon, along with Kinsinger, more recently made the decision to travel north from Missouri to Mitchellville, Iowa, a short 20 minute drive from the state's capital of Des Moines. They chose to combine their talents at their new Blue Meadows Farm, located at Melvin Jennings' facility.

"It has always been a goal to have my own training barn and the timing was just right where Melvin Jennings had an open barn and was going to close his training facility," Kinsinger explained. "So, we decided to lease Melvin Jennings' barn and open Blue Meadows. We thank Melvin Jennings and Carol Lawson-Townsend for giving us an opportunity to rent the barn and start our business."

The newly opened Blue Meadows boasts both a training and lesson program for riders as young as four and is looking forward to developing young as well as finished horses and ponies.

"I am so excited to keep growing the lesson program and help young riders develop and recognize their talents and love for the Saddlebred and Hackney breeds," Brannon said.

As Brannon and Kinsinger's first show season unfolds with their new training operation, Bob and Tonya Brison have no doubt that Blue Meadows Farm will succeed.

"Nick will work hard and give it 100%," they said. "He has a lot of patience with the horses and ponies. He's just a good guy. And we wish him the best of luck."

Blue Meadows Farm is a welcomed addition to the ever growing Saddlebred and Hackney industry. It is the result of the efforts of two young talents with the experience, passion, and commitment to excel at the helm of their newest training venture.



Nick Kinsinger and Lauren Brannon are at the helm of the new Blue Meadows Farm. Both have had extensive careers in the Saddlebred and Hackney industries.



Nick Kinsinger spent eight years working with Bob and Tonya Brison at their Fairview Farms. He credits the Brisons for their help in teaching him how to work with young horses, including the now four-year-old stud Designed Asset.



While at Fairview Farms, Kinsinger piloted Heartland Jameson to the 2020 Four-Year-Old Road Pony World's Champion honors.