



GRANDPARENTS have a tendency to appease their grandchildren regardless of the situation. Stefanie Kritzler's grandmother, Olive Greenwood, is a prime example of this, as she facilitated Stefanie's introduction to horses.

"For Christmas my grandmother gave me riding lessons for a year without permission from my parents," Stefanie joked.

A then six-year-old Stefanie had spent a week with her grandmother while her parents were away on vacation. Their continuous drives past a horse barn resulted in Stefanie begging her grandmother to ride. These early riding lessons gifted by Olive Greenwood would eventually lead to the opening of Stefanie and her husband Rob Kritzler's Green Wood Stables - named after Stefanie's grandmother who fueled her passion for horses. The Iowa based facility has since become a premiere destination known for training top American Saddlebreds and Hackneys with the Kritzlers at the helm.

Though Stefanie Kritzler's family was uninvolved in the horse industry, she knew almost immediately that she wanted to pursue a career in the equine world.

"I always wanted to be a horse trainer," she said. "I really wanted to teach more than I wanted to train."

Stefanie rode successfully growing up and even trained her own horse while in high school. After college she credits her time spent working with Martin Cockriel, Chuck Browning, Vikki Vogel, and Dr. Alan Raun, as influential in helping her training career. The lessons learned through her work with those trainers allowed for Green Wood Stables to open its doors in 2003. A year later, Stefanie was joined on the eight acre and 29 stall property in Iowa by her husband Rob.

Rob Kritzler's introduction to horses was quite simple - his mother took him for riding lessons as a child. This developed into a love for the animal and furthered into a career as a horse trainer, which is something that he said he knew he wanted to pursue.

"I think it was a combination of the feeling of success when you teach a horse something mixed with the challenge of getting that accomplished," he said.

Rob began working for Don Harris and then both Debbie Foley and Peter Palmer when they were together. He then continued his career working for Carter Cox, whom he credited as having the biggest influence on his training career. Rob finally journeyed to Iowa where, like his wife, he worked for Dr. Raun at Reedannland.

Together, both Rob and Stefanie Kritzler have combined their talents to create the successful training operation that has come to be known as Green Wood Stables. The facility's nearly two decades in business have resulted in extraordinary accomplishments. Green Wood Stables prides itself on training a variety of horses and riders ranging from academy exhibitors to open horses. One of those horses, Undulata's Quiz Show, has been a top champion for Rob in the three-gaited ranks. Lauren DeLange and Michael Krick's entry has campaigned quite successfully for multiple years with Rob in the saddle, claiming the reserve honors in the Three-Gaited Over 15.2 offering at the American Royal last year and most recently sweeping the open division in his 2021 debut at Des Moines Springfest.

"What has made Quiz Show so successful is how game he is," Rob said. "He's not one bit silly, just game. Whether riding or jogging, you get about four steps of walking and then we're off. Managing his gameness is the only real challenge of him."

From open horses to junior competitors, Green Wood Stables has had additional success with their young entries in training. Rob Kritzler was in the saddle of Charles Goodman's Regal's Berry Blue last year in Louisville to be named the ASR National Futurity Three-Year-Old Park Pleasure World's Champion.

"What I loved or, more appropriately, what I'm thankful for, is how trainable he was," Rob said. "At the end of June last year, I took him to a show to work and realized what I was doing with him wasn't going to work. I took him home and changed everything that I had done with him. Three weeks later he won at Central States and then it was on to Louisville."

In addition to the horses that Rob and Stefanie campaign with, Green Wood Stables is also the home base for many top horse and rider combinations in the amateur and junior exhibitor divisions. Stefanie mentioned the accomplished Berry Daring with Lydia Graves who have transitioned to the adult country pleasure ranks this year, young Finley Wood and her five-gaited show pleasure powerhouse CH My Dreamboat Annie, and the slick racking Breathtaking Effect SGF with Brenna Smith, as all being combinations that she is proud of.

"When we go to buy a horse, we make it clear to the client that we aren't looking for a specific division," Stefanie said. "We are looking for the best horse. I think you have to match the person's personality and the rider's style of riding to the division they are going to go in. Rob is an outstanding horse trainer and I am a pretty good riding instructor and we do it together. He trains the horses and we teach every show rider lesson together. Usually he is the warm up arena and I am putting them in the ring but between the two of us we each bring something different to the table."

Not only is Green Wood Stables a thriving training barn, but it is also has become the place where the Kritzlers share their passion for horses with their children. Rob and Stefanie's three daughters, Susanna, Olivia, and Alicia, are all part of the Saddlebred industry, and have enjoyed great success in the show ring. Rob and Stefanie both collectively agreed that they thoroughly enjoy participating in this sport alongside their daughters.

Eldest daughter Susanna Kritzler has been most recently linked to CH Monnington Sir Charles. The pair are the reigning two-time Five-Gaited Country Pleasure National Champions as well as the 2020 Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure 14-17 Section Two Reserve World's Champions. Stefanie explained that not only is Susanna an outstanding exhibitor, but she also works diligently in all facets of the industry.

1 Stefanie and Rob Kritzler have made a great family business with Green Wood Stables.

2 Green Wood Stables is home to many top champions including Undulata's Quiz Show. Rob Kritzler has been successfully campaigning this entry in the open three-gaited ranks.

GREEN WOOD STABLES: A FAMILY AFFAIR

BY SARA PIZZUTO | PHOTOS BY HOWIE SCHATZBERG & DOUG SHIFLET PHOTO BY YOUNG



"Susanna is an outstanding human," she said. "I don't even know how to explain it. She is brilliantly smart and extremely responsible. She works the horse shows just like a groom would and has all along and I want this for her because she does so much for not only us but for our clients."

Younger sister Olivia excels in the saddle seat equitation 13 and under ranks with Bravia and is a top competitor with the Hackney Pony Wait & See's Winter Day, with whom she shares with Susanna. Stefanie explained that her daughters do all of the training and the work with Winter Day. He teamed with Olivia last year to be named the Hackney Pleasure Pony Under Saddle winner at the American Royal.

"I am just there as the pony's fan club because I think he is the most awesome thing on the planet," Stefanie said. "Olivia really loves her animals. She is the one that has a real personal connection with the horse. She would sit in the horse's stall for five hours if I let her."

Alicia Kritzler is the youngest of the Kritzler's three daughters. The nine-year-old is currently excelling in the academy division. Her mother Stefanie explained that Alicia will likely have a lengthy and prosperous career in the horse industry.

"I think that Alicia, our youngest, will be a horse trainer," she said. "You can see it in her already. Alicia is already the trainer around here. She is awesome and she works for every trainer she can at the horse shows and cleans all of their carts and does all of that stuff."

Stefanie explained that one of the most challenging parts of her job as a horse trainer is balancing the role of being both a mother and a trainer. She said both her and Rob want to make their daughters feel special while still giving their utmost attention to their clients. One of the ways that they have done this is by promising their children that they can keep the horses that she and Rob buy for them.

"I want them to understand that these are their forever horses and they aren't part of our job," Stefanie said. "I think they really appreciate that. Susanna's first horse CH Shady Creek's Genius is now 24 and will obviously live his life and his days here as her pet and Olivia has Bravia and we will just continue that process. I think it helps them a little bit. I am also blessed with a lovely woman here named Julie Witthoff who has basically adopted my children. Otherwise they would realistically never get in the show ring. She gets them dressed and gets their hair done and all of those things that I would never get done as a trainer otherwise."

While the three Kritzler daughters excel in the show ring, son Jason is a champion in his own right, successfully participating in multiple sporting events. Stefanie explained that while their son is not involved in the equine world, they use the horse show off season to fully commit themselves to him.

"I will admit that one of the things my customers have been outstanding about is understanding that we ignore our son for nine months out of the year so December, January, and February he has us for whatever sport it is," she said. "If he was doing something, we weren't teaching or working."

Balancing the Kritzler's thriving business coupled with their family life can make for a hectic schedule. However both Rob and Stefanie have managed to excel in all facets in both their roles as trainers and as parents. The success of the Green Wood Stables horses and riders have helped their training barn earn a reputation for greatness. Stefanie believes it is how her and Rob approach their work that has made them such reputable trainers.

"I believe very strongly that I don't do this to teach people to ride horses," she said. "I do this because God uses us as a vehicle to put the right people in our lives - the people that need us and the people that we need. We aren't always supposed to understand which one it is but we always find out later. What Green Wood does successfully is that we are a barn just full of people that love each other and we try to keep it that way. Every one of those riders knows that they are loved by all of us and I think that's the most important part."

This mindset will allow for all associated with Green Wood Stables to enjoy yet another prosperous year as the 2021 season unfolds.

3 All three of Rob and Stefanie Kritzler's daughters are involved in the industry including eldest daughter Susanna. She and CH Monnington Sir Charles are the reigning two-time Five-Gaited Country Pleasure National Champions.

4 The Kritzler girls - Alicia, Susanna, and Olivia - are all heavily involved in the operation and showing.

5 From seasoned show ring veterans, to young horses, Green Wood Stables has put their stamp on all facets of the industry. Rob Kritzler presented Regal's Berry Blue to be named the ASR National Futurity Three-Year-Old Park Pleasure World's Champion just last year.

6 Daughter Olivia Kritzler enjoys the 13 and under equitation division with Bravia and additionally excels with Hackney Pony Wait & See's Winter Day, with whom she personally trains alongside sister Susanna.

