

Erin Boggs Richey

People's Choice Instructor of the Year

By Jenny Grey



Erin Boggs-Richey, the People's Choice Instructor of the Year, began teaching the art and science of equitation while still in her teens. While still a very young woman, she has achieved world class results.

Erin Boggs Richey, who began teaching the art and science of equitation while still in her early teens, has reached the top of her profession as a very young woman. A combination of hard work, natural talent and an innate understanding of how to motivate and develop people of all ages has yielded world class results. For her continued, well-deserved success in 2015, Erin has earned your vote as the People's Choice Instructor of the Year.

Gaining early teaching experience at the original Cape Cod Farm in Ohio owned by her parents, Kathy and Gene Boggs, Erin is now operating Cape Cod Equestrian Center from Tina Stodd's facility in Spring Valley, OH, where Chris Reiser trained his show string. With a skill set recognized early in her career, she became captain of the 1996 World Cup team and has since trained multiple riders who have earned multiple regional, national and world championship titles. A world class rider, she began showing in both performance and equitation at seven years old and won the Ladies Three-Gaited 15.2 World's Championship in 2002 with CH To Die For. In this feature we review the accomplishments of Erin's riders, beginning with Aleia Brown, Cece Bolka, Sophia Stillings and Maddie Hale, all of whom won People's Choice awards under Erin's expert direction.

Aleia Brown, the People's Choice Junior Exhibitor of the Year, exemplifies Erin's ability not only to produce first-class, dedicated equitation riders but also to develop the whole person, ready to succeed in whatever path they choose. Aleia, who has ridden with Erin since she was a small child, won the 2014 Saddle Seat Medal Finals as well as the NHS Good Hands Final, the latter with a unanimous vote of the judges. In 2015 she was the undefeated Saddle Seat Equitation World's Champion at Louisville and won the UPHA Senior Challenge Cup Reserve National Championship and the Saddle Seat Equitation Championship at the American Royal. While very proud of these accomplishments, one of her favorite non-show moments came from the Royal where Aleia celebrated her 18th birthday. In a group of essays written by aspiring scholarship applicants, three young people cited Aleia as having been an inspiration to them. With Erin's coaching and her own hard work, determination and understanding of what is important in life, Aleia has become an inspirational leader.

Both Aleia and Erin have watched each other grow and mature over the years. When Aleia was very young, everything was explained to her in precise terms. Now there is an unspoken communication between them demonstrating a level of trust built over a long term relationship. When we spoke to Aleia's mom, Beth, earlier this year she told us, "I think Erin always believed that Aleia would do big things. She has made her what she is today. The more Erin expects, the more Aleia digs deep and is at her best."

An emotional year for Aleia who aged out in 2015, she finds it hard to put into words what Erin means to her, summing it up by saying, "I will always continue to learn from her. She's always been there in barn and in life...Huge thanks to Erin and all my friends who have watched me practice and were there at the rail to cheer me on!"

Cecilia (Cece) Bolka, the People's Choice Pleasure Equitation 14-17 winner has made huge strides in both her skill level and maturity of performance. Progressing from the lesson to the Academy program, she began riding in performance classes in 2013. Attending her first Louisville in 2014, she earned a strong fourth place performance with Aussie in Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited Show Pleasure 14-17 Section I. Ready to tackle Class A equitation in 2015, she was paired up with Starmaker's Hakuna Matati just two weeks before the first show. Even though Cece was inexperienced and her horse had never shown in equitation, it was a partnership that Erin knew would work. Cece was undefeated at Indianapolis Charity, winning Pleasure Equitation 17 and Under, the UPHA Pleasure Equitation Challenge Cup and the Saddle Seat Equitation Championship. Cece also ended her season undefeated at the Blue Ribbon Fall Classic as the Pleasure Equitation Champion.

Cece's mom, Lisa Ulliman, who learned to ride with Erin in order to gain a greater appreciation of her daughter's sport observed "It was a big jump from performance to equitation. One of Erin's great strengths is in being able to develop a horse and rider as a team...she recognizes the capability of a horse and understands what motivates a person. It's impressive." Feeling blessed that she and Cece were lucky enough to have found Cape Cod when they knew so little, they are grateful to be training with Erin today. "I'm very proud and excited people saw the effort and hard work pay off", said Lisa of Cece's People's Choice award. "It's incredibly special."

Sophia Stillings, who has ridden with Erin and Reese Richey since she was 6 years old, rocketed to the top of the Morgan western seat equitation judges' cards last year. Have just moved up from the walk-trot division where she was a superstar, this was a big next step in an already stellar career. Winning the Walk-Jog Western Seat Equitation Morgan World Championship in both 2013 and 2014 riding Artful Image (Rose), she took a huge leap forward as she moved up to the junior division, ending her year at the Morgan Grand National as the 2015 Western Seat Junior Equitation Reserve World Champion. She earned a People's Choice award in Morgan Western Seat 13 and Under Equitation and Artful Image won the People's Choice award for Morgan Western Pleasure 13 and Under.



Erin's pride and joy, her now seven year-old daughter Reagan, loves to be at the farm and cheer the team on at horse shows.



Aleia Brown, the People's Choice Junior Exhibitor of the Year was greeted by Erin and her parents, Beth and Dennis Brown after winning the Senior Saddle Seat Equitation World's Championship last year.

Sophia's mom, Kirsten, who has witnessed Erin's growth as an instructor, appreciates her good communications skills and her commitment to the success of her riders by ensuring they reach their full potential. Describing the partnership between Sophia and Rose she said, "They are both headstrong and a bit sassy but smart and willing to put forth the effort." Kirsten reflected "We were thrilled. They have worked hard, succeeded, failed, figured it out and had fun! For us as a family it is so much more than the ribbon...it is the culture and the atmosphere that all of this provides. Having this experience with Rose, the people and the lessons learned will stay with her for a lifetime." Sophia added, "All of our hard work paid off! I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to go out there and have a great show with such an amazing horse."

Maddie Hale, another successful young rider who had a great 2015 show season with Undulata's Blue Light Special, won the Country Pleasure Junior Exhibitor Championship at the Heartland Classic, the Dayton horse show and Springfield Charity as well as a strong third place at Louisville in Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure Section II. For these achievements, Blue Light Special was voted the People's Choice Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure 14-17 champion.

Successful with adults and junior exhibitors alike, Erin strives to maximize the performance of everyone who rides with her. Dr. Morgan Wolin, who has 50 years of show ring experience, commutes from Chicago to ride with Erin. Going back to the time she kept her horses with Gene and Kathy Boggs at Cape Cod Farm, Morgan has seen Erin's progression from a talented teenager to a mature, young woman well respected in the horse industry.

"Adults come with adult baggage", observed Dr. Wolin, a specialist in sports psychology. "It's much harder to train an adult than it is a child." Erin understands this very well, adapting her approach for the older riders. Moving her horse to Ohio to train with Erin last season, Morgan Wolin trained hard for adult equitation and the Good Hands Adult Finals in its inaugural year. Morgan takes great satisfaction in having completed her show season winning Adult Saddle Seat Equitation at the Blue Ribbon Fall Classic, reserve in the UPHA Challenge Cup at the Mane Event show as well as reserve in the first Good Hands Adult Finals.

"Erin has natural instincts", Morgan told us. "You may be good but she can make you better. She's meticulous but it's done in a caring, funny way. She's very patient and celebrates when you 'get' something. She combines encouragement mixed with critique." Having ridden in the early days with Helen Crabtree, Morgan appreciates Erin's focus on not leaving anything to chance. While prepared down to the last, minute detail, she has a happy demeanor and is full of energy and infectious enthusiasm.

Lisa Ulliman agreed with Morgan Wolin regarding Erin's ability to relate to the older rider. "Adults tend to be more set in their ways and over analyze whereas kids are more flexible in mind, body and spirit", she reflected. "Erin has great intuition; she reads individuals well. She knows when to push and when to back off. She has been able to make it a special and enjoyable experience for me." Lisa, who began showing CH Mojo in five-gaited show pleasure in 2014, has consistently placed at the top of the ribbons for the last two years.

Erin has successfully adapted her teaching style in a way that will allow Aleia Brown and others to make a seamless transition to adult competition. She takes great pride in both Aleia's show ring success and of the person she has become, referring to her as "Wonderful both inside and out." While sad Aleia that has aged out, Erin is thrilled she will still be part of the team riding in the ladies three-gaited division and adult equitation with her wonderful equine partner Madera's Fortune (AKA Thomas).

Not only thrilled with the success of her world champion riders, Erin takes great pleasure in welcoming promising newcomers to the barn such as Hallie Ricci, who is commuting from New Jersey and Nicole Rodriguez from Michigan. Emma Bohaboy, who graduated from the Academy program in 2014, was undefeated in equitation at Springfield last year. Genevieve Arzberger, also in Erin's Academy program, moved into Class A walk-trot competition last year, placing fourth in the Saddle Seat Equitation 9-10 World's Championship in her first trip to Louisville. Avery Ochester, who began her Class A show career last year in 2015, won the qualifying class and the Walk-Trot Pleasure Championship at both Dayton and the Blue Ribbon Fall Classic riding two time reserve world's champion, Brianna Fox. Kaleigh Hogan, new to the barn last year is showing great promise as is Amy Baisden, in her first year out of the Academy division.

Another rider who began her career with Erin in the Academy division, Maison Boyle won Saddle and Bridle's Pleasure Equitation Junior Medallion National Championship and the Pleasure Equitation Olympics Championship in 2012. She came back very strong in 2015 after taking a break from equitation as the Springfield Charity Saddle Seat Equitation Champion. All of these riders of different ages and at different stages are testaments to Erin's ability to develop, instruct, bond with and motivate them to be the best they can be. Erin is very grateful to Maison's mom, Angie Boyle, who manages the office, gives lessons and acts as the 'go to' person for everyone at the farm. "I would like to congratulate Erin on being honored with Instructor of the Year", said Angie. "It is well-deserved for all her hard work and dedication...I am proud to be a part of the Cape Cod Equestrian Center team and look forward to another exciting show season."

Erin has a lot to be proud of but never a person to rest on her laurels, she continues to look for creative ways to bring new people into the business. Recently accepting a half Saddlebred/half Dutch Harness Horse in training for the equitation division, she is pioneering something that has never been tried with this breed until now. "Not everyone can afford a top Saddlebred", she reflected. "I need to find other options for some of my riders."

Erin, as astute about herself as she is insightful about her riders reflected "Time and having a baby has softened me. It's taught me to nurture both the inside and the outside." Her 'baby' is seven-year old Reagan who loves to be at the barn and cheer on the team at the rail. "We're a tight family", Erin said of 'the girls' who ride at the farm. Bonding with each of them, she promotes a positive team atmosphere. "We have sleepovers, everybody practices on the same three nights. I'm very proud of that." Grateful to everyone who has helped launch her on an upward trajectory Erin added "I want to thank Reese Richey for all his hard work and support; without his help none of this would have been possible. I wish him the best of luck in the next chapter of his life."

With hard work, determination, skill acquired over a lifetime of learning that began at her parents' farm and an innate understanding of what motivates both horses and people of all ages, Erin Richey's star continues to rise. With accolades from dedicated and loyal clients, many of whom she started and inspired as small children and in recognition of a highly successful 2015 show season, Erin has earned your votes as the People's Choice Instructor of the Year.



Aleia and Erin literally jumped for joy after Erin's win at Louisville last year in the Saddle Seat Equitation 17-Year-Old Championship.