



THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

People's Choice Trainer Of The Year: *Mark Turner*

People's Choice Instructor Of The Year: *Lillian Shively*

People's Choice Assistant Trainer Of The Year: *Caitlin Cooper*

By Erica Faulkner



Mark Turner and Lillian Shively work together as a team to produce some of the best horses and riders in the country. Here, they greet Alayna Applegate after her win in the Saddle Seat Equitation 12 to 13-Year Old class at last year's World's Championship Horse Show.

P Paul Ryan once said, "Every successful individual knows that his or her achievement depends on a community of persons working together." Mark Turner, Caitlin Cooper, and Lillian Shively certainly understand this concept. Three years ago, they joined efforts and chose to work together to reach a common goal; to open a facility that not only turns out top horses and riders, but also provides a place where everyone feels welcome and everyone is treated like they are family. With this as their vision, they opened DesMar Stables.

Operating at the famous Oak Hill Farm in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, DesMar Stables is producing champion horses and riders, in a variety of divisions. Turner is at the forefront of the training operation, while Cooper assists him with the horses, as well as handles all the paperwork side of the business. Lillian does what Lillian does best; she instructs and mentors the riders that come through the doors. Together, along with Raymond Shively,

they create a world class atmosphere where their customers can grow as riders, to become the best they can be.

Turner grew up in Cradock, South Africa, where his father introduced him to the American Saddlebred. Horses were a part of their family, and horse shows were social events that the family attended together. He knew from an early age that horses were going to be a part of his life. However, he also knew that South Africa was not where he needed to be if he wanted to expand his connections in the Saddlebred industry.

"I came to the United States to work for John Biggins. I had no idea who he was." Turner said. But it didn't take Biggins long to realize he was learning from one of the best. "I have so much respect for John Biggins. He's an incredible horseman."

His next job was with DeLovely Farm working as a groom. Each day he put his best foot forward, always rising to challenge of whatever was asked of him. It was not long before he earned

the respect of his peers and accepted an assistant trainer position. Turner says his time at DeLovely was a great experience for many reasons.

However, he just could not deny his own dream; to own his own barn. When the time was right for him to move on and open his own place, he took the bull by the horns and left Indiana. His travels led him to Kentucky, and when presented with the opportunity to purchase the famous Oak Hill Farm, he knew he had to make it happen. Turner worked a plan with Raymond and Lillian Shively, and together they opened DesMar Stables.

DesMar Stables started out with a competitive string of 12 horses. Turner admits that starting a barn with good quality horses gave him a head start in making a name for himself.

"We certainly have caught some breaks," he said. "I was extremely lucky to have some great ones right out the gate. Champions such as CH The Daily Lottery, CH Sprinkles and CH Nuttin' But Style were on the list, among others."

And it is not just great horses that spurred DesMar Stables into the spotlight. Giving credit where credit is due, Turner admits "Lillian is my trump card." Today, the number of horses in training is closer to 45, and he credits that to Lillian. "She has really grown this business."

Raymond and Lillian both contribute to the success of the barn and Turner realizes it. "I am so honored that they are here. Without them, none of this would have been possible."

A legend to most, Lillian needs no introduction. From the best of the best for equitation riders, to smart riding amateurs, Lillian is the one who is behind them all. She admits that she is extremely competitive, and enjoys when her riders win. But, there is so much more to it than that for her. Her dedication to her riders is one of a kind, and she instills in them that life is not about blue ribbons.

"I want my students to learn a little bit about life, not just about riding," said Lillian. "I want them to take what they learn from this sport and put it to good use in their daily affairs. I want them to be good people."

It is this attitude that truly sets Lillian apart. Genuine, with a deep desire to make sure her students excel in life, Lillian's riders know they are loved. Each one of them holds a special place in her heart. Whether it's the camaraderie that is shared between instructor and student over dinner after a long day of lessons, or her refusal to give up on any of them, Lillian goes above and beyond to ensure that they know that she is in their corner every step of the way.

"I never, ever give up on anyone," she said. "If you give me someone who says they can't, I am going to show them they can." And she is not just referring to the idea of winning a blue ribbon, or the equitation triple crown. "I just want my riders to pick a goal and accomplish that. It does not even have to be related to the color on a ribbon. Ribbons are not what matter."

Amery Creighton, a customer of the barn, said it best when she commented that "Lillian is perfectness with compassion. She is everyone's mother."

"Lillian is one of a kind," Turner said. "The knowledge she has, and the undying, tireless daily effort she puts forth is unreal."

Cooper might be younger than the rest of the group, but she brings an endless desire to learn. A real go getter, she handles herself with maturity beyond her years. A versatile young lady, she can and will do anything that is asked of her. Cooper helps with exercising horses, grooming show horses, handling the office duties, and even helps in the breeding shed.

"I love everything about the barn life." She said. "When Mark opened DesMar Stables in March of 2015, he offered me the assistant trainer position. Of course, I said yes!" Having worked with Turner for so long while at DeLovely, it just made sense for them both to continue their working relationship.



Caitlin Cooper, seen here showing CH Royal Crest's Rhinestone Cowboy, has been working alongside Turner for years, making her the perfect assistant for DesMar Stables.

"I feel like Mark and myself make a good team." Cooper points out that over the years of working with Turner, she has come to understand what he likes, and how he likes things done. "I feel like a lot of things go unsaid between us, but we always get the job done. I know what to do and where to go without him having to tell me"

"Caitlin is a valued part of DesMar Stables," said Turner. "She is an incredibly hard worker. I know I can count on her and trust her to keep things running smoothly." Turner hit the jackpot when he brought her in to be part of the team. "Help like her is hard to find."

Cooper is just as talented on a horse, as she is with running the barn. CH SS Lies And Alibis, Hero's Forever Ablaze, Thunder Gone Wild, I'm Happy Go Lucky, CH Intoxicating Heir, and CH A Travelin' Man are just a few of the horses she has shown over the years. Her ability to adapt to any horse is a desirable trait to have as a trainer, and is one she acquired from all the catch riding she did over the years.

A new addition to DesMar is the breeding operation. And this is where Cooper shines. "I really enjoy anything that has to do with breeding horses," said Cooper. "I love foaling mares and getting to follow all the vet work from breeding to birth." She even considered becoming a theriogenologist at one time. Thanks to the trust and respect that Cooper has earned from Turner, he has given her the opportunity to run that side of the business. "It has been an incredible learning opportunity," she said.

This is just the beginning for Turner, Lillian and Cooper and their DesMar Stables operation. Just this past year alone, they came home from the Word's Championship Horse Show with 7 wins and 14 top three finishes. Obviously, their system of hard work, respect, and appreciation for one another is paying off. There is no doubt the future is bright for all of them.