

# FUTURE FORUM

## *The Up and Coming of Young Trainers*

By Britni Kovalenko

This is another segment of the Future Forum series featuring the stories of young trainers from across the country. There isn't a school for horse training outside of the school of hard knocks so it's interesting to follow the paths taken by these young professionals as they pay their dues in their quest for making a successful career out of their passion for horses.

This week we are featuring Megan Gallagher of Grand Finale Stables in Grass Valley, California. Born with the passion of horses in her blood, Gallagher was in the saddle before she could walk. Working under some of the greatest names in the Morgan industry gave Gallagher the knowledge and experience to open her own training facility in her home state of California.

**Give us a breakdown of where it all began for you.**

**How did you get involved in horses and at what age?**

**GALLAGHER:** My love for horses is genetic! Thanks to my mother and grandfather, I rode before I could walk. At eight years old, I was caught drooling over the neighbor's horses. They were Morgan horses and I've been in love with the breed since that day.

**What made you decide to become a professional trainer?**

**GALLAGHER:** I tried to go the "normal" life route. The one where you go to college and get a desk job, but I was always pulled back to my passion for horses. It became clear that it was my calling.

**Have you worked under any other trainers? If so, who?**

**GALLAGHER:** Yes, I have had the opportunity to work for some great trainers. I first worked for Belle Bradford. Belle was an excellent mentor and introduced me to the trainer who became my biggest influence, Eitan Beth-Halachamey. Working with Eitan is an experience I will never forget. I also worked with Julie Adams. While there, I was given the chance to work with quality horses and gain valuable experience.

**Who are your role models/mentors? Why?**

**GALLAGHER:** There are numerous trainers that I look up to. However, the hardship brought upon our industry by Covid-19 has brought a clear role model to mind, Kelly Kraegel. Kelly has shared her creative business saving ideas and has made an effort to rally morale and support for fellow trainers. I love seeing the camaraderie among trainers in our industry.

**What is your favorite thing about being a trainer?**

**GALLAGHER:** Seeing my horses and riders succeed and achieve their goals is my favorite thing about being a trainer. I love being instrumental in their journey to reach their full potential.



**What is the hardest thing about being a trainer?**

**GALLAGHER:** The hardest thing about being a trainer is getting away from the barn, mentally and physically. When you love your job, the passion can be consuming.

**What advice do you have for the younger generation who have their eyes set on becoming horse trainers?**

**GALLAGHER:** My advice would be to have integrity and honest. Be the pillars of your business and training philosophy. Clients appreciate these attributes.

**What do you think is essential for the industry to focus on to ensure its success?**

**GALLAGHER:** I think it's essential for our industry to focus on the youth. Getting kids to fall in love with horses and endeavor to compete. This is a passion of mine and I make an effort to stoke the passion of horses in every kid who comes through my barn. Making shows affordable and accessible to everyone is also important.