

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 Alyssa Wick of Hardwood Creek Farm in Hugo, Minnesota. Growing up in a Morgan training barn, Wick knew she wanted to be a horse trainer as soon as she knew what a career meant. After one summer internship and one assistant training job, Wick moved back home to help her parents, Lyle and Colleen Wick, and became part of the family legacy at their Hardwood Creek Farms.

Alyssa Wick

Give us a breakdown of where it all began for you. How did you get involved in horses and at what age?

WICK: I grew up on a horse farm, my parents have been training horses since before I was born. I got my first pony, "Silver", when I was 4 years old, he was my babysitter in the barn. I would just ride Silver around while my parents worked. Any free time I had while growing up, I spent it in the barn.

What made you decide to become a professional trainer?

WICK: I believe I was 8 when I decided I wanted to be a horse trainer, that's about when I realized what it meant to have a career. Since I can remember there was never a doubt in my mind that I would become a professional trainer. I loved the lifestyle and of course the horses so it just always made sense to me.

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

WICK: I worked under two trainers. First, I did a summer internship with Luman Wadhams after my freshman year of college. This was my first time working for anyone other than my parents, and to this day I still use many of the training techniques that I learned from Luman that summer. I am very grateful for that internship. Then in 2011, I moved to Maine and spent about three and a half years working at David Rand's. Working for David was a huge growing experience for me, the amount that I learned and the opportunities I was given at Rand are immeasurable.



Who are your role models/mentors? Why?

WICK: My parents are definitely my biggest role models. They are the hardest working and most ethical people I know. They taught me to never cut corners in training and that the well-being of the horse comes first always. After them, David Rand would be my biggest mentor. I soaked up all I could when working at Rand. David is an incredibly hard-working individual and from him a big thing that I learned is that persistence is key. He never gives up on making a horse into what he knows it can be, even if it takes longer than usual to get there, something that I remind myself often.

What is your favorite thing about being a trainer?

WICK: Working with young horses is my favorite thing about being a trainer. Working against each individual horse's weaknesses and figuring out how to best teach them their job is always fun and definitely rewarding once it starts coming together.

What is the hardest thing about being a trainer?

WICK: Growing up naturally an introverted person, for me to break through that and develop the communication skills that it takes to be successful training at a large public farm was definitely a challenge. I think people often downplay the amount of communication skills it really takes to be a horse trainer.