

UNSUNG HEROES

Of The Industry

BUG



HOME BARN
Great Island Riding
Academy at Taylor
River Farm
**INSTRUCTOR/
TRAINER**
Ellie Stevens

REGISTERED NAME
Marno's Firelight
Express
BREEDING
Christmas Hymn x
Pinehaven Firebird
AGE
30

HOW DID BUG BECOME A PART OF YOUR LESSON PROGRAM?

Bug has been part of Great Island Riding Academy since it opened in June 2020, though he is no stranger to the lesson kids of New England. Bug was originally a school horse with Susan Casper of S&S Stables where Ellie, just a teen at the time, oversaw his care in the lesson program. She used to help put him and his riders in the show ring, and with that, grew familiar and fond of the old gelding. When Ellie had the opportunity to call Bug her own in 2018, she couldn't resist adding the handsome old man to the team. He has a forever home at Great Island and his golden years have only just begun!

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL WEEK IN THE LIFE OF BUG:

Bug LOVES teaching up/down and toddler lessons. His pogo-stick trot quickly teaches his young riders how to post. Before afternoon lessons begin, Bug's favorite thing to do is turn out and have playtime with his friend Boomer. During lesson hours, you can find him getting loved on by kids, and giving about two lessons a night. He also looks forward to wearing the unicorn horn at birthday parties, and still enjoys bareback rides in the snow. Bug has since retired from the show ring, but while teaching at home, he autopilots his young riders around on the rail and understands nearly every word that comes out of our instructor's mouths.

WHAT ARE HIS GREATEST ATTRIBUTES FOR BEING AN UNSUNG HERO IN YOUR PROGRAM?

Bug's continuous claim to fame is his ability to produce strong, smart riders, that have a passion for the Morgan horse. He has been the foundation to countless World Champion riders, including Sophie & Emma Ouellette and Tatum Milley. No stranger to the Oklahoma winner's circle, Sophie writes, "Bug was the first horse that I ever showed, and he inspired my love for Morgans. He was far from an easy, push button horse so I quickly learned the value of strong legs and a good seat. Even though I landed on the ground more than I'd like to admit—he taught me to persevere."

Sophie's older sister, Emma also has fond memories on how Bug was her foundation of riding. She says "Bug was an extremely special horse to not only me, but my entire family. He guided me through transitioning from Lead Line to Walk Trot, and I also began showing at the regional level with him. He taught me the beginning stages of patterns that began my equitation career."

Kara and Kaitlyn Wilson, two young professionals in the industry today, also got their start with this one-of-a-kind gentleman. Although his cute little 'bug eyes' are no longer seen bouncing around the show ring, he still deserves the credit of creating industry supporters of the future.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Bug has a signature shoulder drop maneuver which ensures every rider's first fall is soft and easy. He loves to randomly do it at the walk. We think it is his way of saying "Heels Down!!"