

## New Canaan Mounted Troop

### **Building leadership, responsibility and confidence in youth through sound horsemanship.**

All students and volunteers walk through our barn doors with a love for horses and leave with so much more

Congratulations to all of our cadets for finishing and achieving so much success here at troop over this past year. And a very special congratulations and thank you to our four graduating seniors, Devon, Hannah, Maddie, and our cadet major, Margot. I know you will all be missed, and we here at troop wish you the best of luck in whatever you choose to do in this next chapter of your life.

Horses, and riding horses, has been my passion since I can remember. My fondest memories are of the times that I spent at the barn, riding, grooming and playing with my horses, and my friends that also rode.

I have ridden at many different barns over the years, but I have never seen a place as special as New Canaan Mounted Troop. It is a magical place that allows young people and adults alike to experience the gifts that horses have to offer. In addition to riding, the learning that takes place here is immeasurable. I've witnessed team work and support within this group that I haven't seen anywhere else. The leadership, friendship, and camaraderie are amazing! I know that the friendships and bonds that are you are forming here today will last a lifetime.

The days I spent at the barn formed, in many ways, the person I am today. Horses have taught me so many things. Things like kindness, perseverance, commitment, dedication, humility, and grace in triumph as well as failure. I learned how to care for another being, and how to show up for my them no matter what. Some days I didn't feel like it. I was tired, stressed out, or too busy. But, I always did.

So I thought today, I would speak about some of the specific lessons I've learned that have helped me in my life.

Remember to always find your edge...

In riding, you are always evaluating where you are with your horse. You try to ask your horse to bend a little more, step a little stronger, move a little bouncier. You work on aiding a little softer, sitting a little deeper, developing a more consistent contact. Whenever you have achieved a level of mastery in your riding skills, you assess where you are and look for the next step. Riding is an act of constant learning, improving and discovery. Pushing your self that one little bit more toward either a new level of understanding/ability, or toward an completely new skill. Hopefully, your life will be that way too.

Just as you can learn a riding skill more deeply, you should also seek to develop your skills and experiences in all aspects of life. So get out there, learn, do, and keep on finding your edge! Becoming a lifelong lover of learning and a seeker of adventure. They are the ingredients of a full life! Remember to always find your edge.

Find balance.....

In riding, it's all about finding the right balance. Learning to find a useful, correct balance in horseback riding takes time and perseverance. Balance between hand and leg, pressure and finesse. Once you have achieved even a basic level of balance, things flow more smoothly, and riding becomes easier. Your horse, or partner will be more happy as well. In your life, when you can find the balance between work, play, studying, and doing something for your *self*, things somehow seem to go smoother, easier, and you might even find yourself becoming happier! Find balance.

Never Get Bored.....

From the outside, it looks like the horse and rider are going round and round and round in circles. From the inside, you are so focused on the process of developing so many things WHILE you go around those circles that you never have a chance to get bored! I have often heard from non-riding people that it looks like the horse is doing all the work. That's the way it should look. But, we all know that's not the case. For me, riding is NEVER boring.

Finding the things you love to do in life will leave you satisfied and content. Finding a sense of purpose and reaching for that ultimate goal will keep life exciting and new..... Like an adventure! Keeping things fresh and challenging for years to come. Never get bored!

Learn to listen.

There is a constant communication occurring between you and your horse. Even if you don't know it, it is happening and your horse is picking up signals from your actions. As you develop your communication with your horse, you will realize how much you can read from your horse's behavior and subtle communications.

The same goes with life. The concept of listening to our fellow humans, from a personal level to a global level, is critical to the development of humankind. Communication is key in all aspects – from making friends as children, to learning skills at school, to maintaining personal relationships, to holding jobs and securing business deals – life is communication. And the most critical step in communicating is listening. Learn to listen

In the end, life is really all about falling down, dusting ourselves off, and getting back on the horse. Back in the saddle.....

This will be your life. Over and over. You will have amazing days, but you will also have bad days. It is on those bad days that we can fall back on our experiences riding horses and being at Troop. You will have to dust yourself off and get back in the game!

Finally, I want to remind all of you that you are New Canaan Mounted Troopers, and as so you represent the troop everywhere you go. You may be the only example of The Mounted Troop to someone who has never heard of us. It is for this reason that we all have to behave in a manner that would make us proud to be represented by you. In all areas of your life, be a trooper.