



Fairfield University and Sarah Lawrence College Equestrian Teams Continue to Excel at New Canaan Mounted Troop

Wellington, FL - October 31, 2006. New Canaan Mounted Troop, located in New Canaan, CT, was founded in 1939 by renowned horsewoman, author, and educator Margaret Cabell Self. NCMT has taught hundreds of children leadership through sound horsemanship in its many years in operation and through the programs it offers to encourage youth development. The organization serves as the training facility for both the Fairfield University and Sarah Lawrence College Equestrian Team programs.

Fairfield University is located in Fairfield, CT, and has called New Canaan Mounted Troop home for the past fifteen years. Currently the team has a roster of 29 riders. Coach Lisa Bailey has been the fearless leader since its founding and is past President of New Canaan Mounted Troop. Former Cacchione Cup winner Kelly Ann Taylor has just recently joined the team as assistant coach. Fairfield's history of involvement runs deep within the NCMT organization. NCMT current executive director, Kristen Abbatiello-Neff was captain of the Fairfield Team when she attended school there, as did Jillian Brown, who continues to serve as a riding instructor at NCMT to this very day.

"New Canaan Mounted Troop has served as a perfect venue for The Fairfield University Program," stated Bailey. "It has provided us with a great foundation for educating students in basic to advanced horsemanship, and has a wide variety of horses of all levels for our training purposes. These horses have led us to emerge as a competitive team on the IHSA circuit. NCMT has played the major role in what has made Fairfield grow. We are grateful for the continued and longstanding relationship," she added.

Recently at the IHSA Horse Show hosted at NCMT in October 2006, Fairfield was overall High Point Champion.

In addition to Fairfield University, students at Sarah Lawrence College, based just north of New York City, travel over 35 miles to practice at NCMT. The team has been practicing there for two years, and in May, sent their first student to the Nationals in nine years. Currently there are 12 riders on the team. Sarah Lawrence College Athletic Director Mary Levine has recognized the value in the process. She has encouraged the team to pursue their goals after recognizing the effort, commitment, passion and sportsmanship that the students display which leads to each their overall personal growth at pivotal development stages of their lives.

Coach Lori Rakoczy has taught the team for nine years, and is a full time NCMT instructor. She approached NCMT a little more than two years ago while looking for the best home to fit the needs of her team. She came to NCMT because of the quality of the horses, the program, and the friendly atmosphere around the barn.

Recently both teams were presented with a donation from The Rider's Closet founded by top show jumping rider Georgina Bloomberg. Bloomberg presented both NCMT and the University teams with a large donation of used riding clothes that she has been collecting for the past year from her riding friends and fellow competitors.

Bloomberg arrived with boxes full of clothes that will be put to great use. "It was such a pleasant surprise that Georgina delightfully chose to donate to us," said Michelle Schmerzler, President of NCMT. "Her personal delivery of them created an unforgettable moment for all of us at NCMT," added Schmerzler. "The students have a lot of respect and admiration for Georgina, not only for what she had accomplished as a rider, but for her reputation, kind heart, and hard work ethic. These traits are consistently encouraged and taught throughout many of the programs NCMT offers to over 180 students involved in their leadership programs. We are so grateful for Georgina and proud of the difference she will make for young aspiring equestrians everywhere," she stated.

For more information on New Canaan Mounted Troop please visit their website online at www.newcanaanmountedtroop.org.

For more information on the Fairfield University Equestrian Team, please visit www.fairfield.edu. To obtain more information on Sarah Lawrence College, please visit www.slc.edu.