

## News Release

# Junior Mazie Pini Loves All Creatures Great and Small

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Thursday, January 11, 2018

She literally has been in the saddle since she was a baby, first with her mother, and later, riding on her own. For University of Minnesota Crookston Junior Mazie Pini, riding is second nature and riding competitively is something she has enjoyed since she was an early teen.

When it came time for Pini to go to college, she had two primary selection criteria: She wanted to attend a college with a hunt seat team and one with a major in animal science that would lead to her goal to study veterinary medicine. The University of Minnesota Crookston offered both.



While she loves both western and hunt seat riding disciplines, she finds hunt seat to be challenging, and if there is one thing Pini loves, it's a challenge. Her competitive spirit took her all the way to nationals last year as a sophomore and Pini has her eye set on returning.

Her focus is not all on horses and riding though as she takes her preparation for veterinary school seriously. Job shadowing equine and small animal veterinarians and volunteering at a big cat sanctuary near her hometown of Grayslake, Ill., have helped prepare her for her college career and beyond. As one might expect, Pini grew up with horses, but their small farm was home to llamas as well and her mother has trained dogs, horses, and even mountain lions.



"I work with food animals on campus so I also have experience with cattle, sheep, and goats," she says. "I would love to work with horses in my career, but I really want to work with all animals from pets to exotics. I love them all."

Growing up, Pini was busy all the time with the family's animals, and now, she finds she is just as busy on campus with the animals. She says it makes the campus feel like home. As far as classes, she loved the animal anatomy and physiology class taught by Assistant Professor Leslie Lekatz. It seems the more she knows about animals—inside and out—the more she knows she belongs in the field.

"I think there is a certain instinct related to working with animals that comes when you focus 100 percent on the animal and watch how it responds to a given situation," she explains. "You have to be in charge all the time and that requires your full attention."

Her parents have served as her greatest inspiration in life. "My dad and mom are extremely hard working, and I come from a big family," she says. "My parents do everything for our family."

Living in Illinois has not stopped her parents from watching their daughter compete traveling long distances to support their daughter's passion to ride.

Some day, Pini would like to have her own veterinary practice, but for now, she is focused on competing at the highest level while continuing to take advantage of any opportunity to help her prepare for graduate school and her future as a doctor of veterinary medicine.



The University of Minnesota Crookston now delivers 34 bachelor's degree programs, 22 minors, and 40 areas of emphasis on campus as well as 14 degree programs entirely online. These degrees are offered in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

In the photos, at top, Mazie Pini in the lab.

At center, left, Mazie loves animals from pets to exotics.

At bottom, right, Mazie competes on the Hunt Seat Equestrian Team for the Golden Eagles.

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