

News Release

UMC student "brushes" with greatness during internship

By Krista Lemos on Friday, November 4, 2005

Most college students know the drill. You get enough semesters and credits under your belt and the excitement starts to build as you can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel: graduation.

But before you can put that framed degree in the wall, you have to line up an internship and successfully complete it. If all goes as planned, you'll perform exceedingly well at said internship, learn some valuable, real-world experience, develop valuable contacts and maybe land a good start to get your career going down the right path.

That's the typical formula when it comes to internships. But when it comes to Charly Reinert's internship this past summer, well, it was anything but typical. For a student working toward a career in the equine industry, Reinert's internship was nothing less than a dream come true.

Reinert, of Tracy, Minn., is a junior at the University of Minnesota, Crookston majoring in Equine Industries Management. She's also on UMC's pre-veterinary medicine track. While perusing the Google.com last spring for summer internship opportunities, one in particular practically jumped off the screen.

It was an internship at the Kentucky Equine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Center, or KESMARC for those in the know.

"It's known as the most complete sports medicine and rehabilitation center for equine athletes in the United States, if not the entire world," Reinert explained.

It's located in Versailles, Kentucky, minutes from Lexington. Or, as Reinert puts it, "It's in the center of the thoroughbred mecca of the state, with many prominent horse farms located there."

She landed the internship.

Quite a place

A human being would pay a lot of money to be treated as the horses are at KESMARC. Some of its features include a swimming pool, aqua-tred, equigym, solarium, large indoor jogging track, 56 stalls, and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT).

Let Reinert explain how it all works:

"The swimming pool and aqua-tred, which is a treadmill under water, are the two main forms of exercise for the recovering athlete. It builds muscle and conditions without the tremendous stress and impact of walking or riding. In essences, it's safer and more revitalizing for the horse.

"The equigym is a modernized form of the traditional horse walker. The horses are allowed to move freely without the restraint of a tie.

"The solarium is used mostly in the winter to give the benefit of sunshine, which provides Vitamin D and immunostimulant, when it is not readily available.

"HBOT is a revolution in medical care. First known to treat divers suffering from the 'bends,' it is now used to treat infections, non-healing wounds, respiratory infections, etc. It enhances oxygen delivery to deprived tissues. The effect is better healing and decreased swelling of the tissue."

KESMARC treats all kinds of horses, but specializes in racing thoroughbreds. The goal, Reinert said, is to improve the horse's health "synergistically." That process gets underway by putting a new, incoming horse on a regimen of vitamin, mineral and gastric enhancing supplements.

Why all that?

"Many horses fail in health due to lack of proper nutrition and, then, in essence, their stomach and intestines fail to be able to digest good food properly," she explained. "We put the good stuff back in."

Once a horse is considered well enough to exercise, it's off to the aqua-tred, where two trainers get in the water with the horse to lead it on laps. Afterward, it's off to the equigym to cool down. If a horse has an injury, there's a half-hour in the HBOT.

Soon, horses start walking and jogging with a rider on KESMARC's "cushy," shredded rubber indoor track. Veterinarians and therapists visit frequently to monitor the horses' progress. The therapists utilize ultrasound, lasers, electrodes, massage, chiropractics, acupuncture, acupressure and other alternative treatments, Reinert said.

"My job, as the intern, was to administer the supplements and medications in the mornings," she said. In addition, she took horses' temperatures, applied and removed bandages, assist the farrier (horse-shoer), dentist or vet during various treatments.

"I did everything from assisting with the floating of teeth to yanking teeth, to mixing glue for shoes, assisting with x-rays, flushing eye ducts and taking thermographic pictures," Reinert said.

She also helped with swimming, and groomed and rinsed each horse before and after they entered the water. She drew blood, de-wormed horses and readied them for shipment.

Reinert lived at KESMARC during her internship, in a small apartment she shared with three other interns. "Literally in the barn!" she said.

When the typical work day ended, the interns were in charge of the horses until the nighttime security personnel arrived at 10 p.m. If anything happened between 5 and 10 p.m. it was up to Reinert and the other interns to handle the situation or call the vet.

One of a kind experience

Reinert put in about 50-60 hours per week, over six days. When she wasn't working, she was soaking up everything the racing atmosphere had to offer, going to Churchill Downs and other racetracks, and touring horse barns.

She gave tours, as part of a Humane Society benefit, of Calumet Farms, once home to Triple Crown winners Whirlaway and Citation, and eight Kentucky Derby winners.

"That was huge!" Reinert said.

She also rode with vets to various farm calls.

All in all, she can't imagine a better opportunity to learn so many different things about the industry, not to mention so many amazing experiences.

"It increased my capability to deal with hot-tempered racehorses, and gave me a chance to view the racing world from the insider's perspective, see what it's really like to be an equine vet, and gain a deeper knowledge for equine medicine and care," she said. "Everything I have been taught at UMC gave me a leg-up working there. I knew how to do basic bandages, knew medications and their uses, and knew my anatomy and physiology well. Without the great instructors at UMC, I would have been ill-prepared for what I was to face in the professional and modern workplace."



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