

Cosequin Presents OTTB Showcase: Giving Thanks

by [Jen Roytz](#)
PaulickReport.com



"Our bond is just... magical," Kaitlyn says of Madeline

There's a group page on Facebook that pops up on my feed every once in a while called OTTB Connect. It's a cross section of people from all over the country who own, ride or otherwise love off-track Thoroughbreds.

The other day I was enjoying my usual battle with insomnia and began scrolling through story after story on the page. I came across a photo of a young girl on her gorgeous gray Thoroughbred, skillfully clearing a small jump with a look of confidence in her eyes and jubilation in her smile. The caption, like so many on the page, told of the girl's unadulterated love and appreciation for her mare, and the subsequent comments in the thread came from others who shared similar emotions for their own off-trackers.

Those sentiments got me thinking about how appropriate it is to be thankful, especially this week, for those who go out of their way for us, whether they be two legged or four.

So, I reached out to the young girl (and in an effort to not come across as "creepy-creeperson," contacted her mother as well) and asked if she would be willing to tell me the story of her Thoroughbred.

As it turns out, she doesn't know her horse's true identity. Madeline, as the mare is known around the barn, has a tattoo and did race, but once she retired from racing she left that life far behind.

Today, Madeline lives in North Carolina at Hidden Springs Stables. While she is owned by the farm, she is leased by the Lisenby family and has been ridden exclusively by Kaitlyn Lisenby for the past year or so.

“The bond between Kaitlyn and Madeline is unbelievable,” said Kaitlyn’s mom, Trish. “Madeline loves being with her and Kaitlyn worships Madeline. We tease that Madeline is an oversized Great Dane. She’ll do anything Kaitlyn asks her to do.”

Fourteen-year-old Kaitlyn began riding at age seven, and at the time she was also participating in gymnastics. As soon as she began taking riding lessons, she fell in love with horses and decided rather quickly to focus solely on them.

Trish, who also grew up riding and specialized in Saddleseat, was looking for a horse her daughter could progress on and said she loved Madeline from the moment she first saw her. Kaitlyn, who was learning both English and Western riding, wanted to focus more in the realm of hunter/jumpers.



Madeline and Kaitlyn have participated in several horse shows

“I knew Madeline would be great for Kaitlyn as a rider. She had a kind eye and was very sweet. We weren’t looking for an OTTB, but the fact that she was one was a non-factor,” said Trish.

Kaitlyn and Madeline have accomplished a lot in the past year or so. They’ve competed in horse shows in both English and Western disciplines, have ridden tackles at the barn, and have really honed their skills together.

“We’ve accomplished so much together, but the biggest thing would probably be slowing ourselves down ó pace was our biggest problem,” said Kaitlyn.

Kaitlyn explained that in the beginning, she focused on quality over quantity when it came to the time spent on Madeline’s back. She kept their rides short, with a slow, deliberate pace and correct headset, and she ended the ride on a positive note while her horse’s mind was still focused.

Someday, Kaitlyn would love nothing more than to own Madeline outright, and Trish laughed that her daughter even has a “Madeline Fund Jar” in hopes of buying the mare. For now, the lease situation is perfect for the family and the horse.

As Kaitlyn talked about Madeline and what she means to her, it reminded me of how much animals have to teach us. Or, maybe it's how much we have to learn.



Kaitlyn is saving money in the hopes of one day buying Madeline

“She is just herself, and I love her for being that. I really don’t know what I would do without her. Our bond is just magical,” said Kaitlyn. “I just love [off-track Thoroughbreds] personality and kindness. They are just lovely animals.”

So, on Thanksgiving, as we take stock of all we have to be thankful for, we should give thanks not only to our family and our friends but also to the animals that make our lives fuller. Whether it's a racehorse, a riding horse, or even a dog or a cat, they have likely given you an added sense of purpose in your life. They have probably been the conduit to forging new friendships. They have done things for you simply because you asked it of them. While they might not understand the concept of Thanksgiving, they will surely enjoy the gesture of appreciation.

THE DEETS:

Name: Registered name unknown (a.k.a “Madeline”)

Born: 2009

Color: Gr/ro

Sire: Unknown

Dam: Unknown

Sale History: Unknown

Race Record: Unknown

Race Earnings: Unknown

If you have or know of a retired Thoroughbred with an interesting story to tell, we’d love to hear about it! Just email Jen Roytz (Jenlroytz@gmail.com) with the horse’s Jockey Club name, background story, and a few photos.

Jen Roytz was the marketing and communications director at Three Chimneys Farm in Midway, Kentucky. She is a freelance writer and marketing and public relations consultant for various entities, both equine and non-equine. She can also still be found on the back of an OTTB most days.

*Contact Jen on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.*

