



The newly graduated pilot cohort of the Aiken Technical College Equine Technician Program

Students: Laura Breckenridge, Cheridan Bump, Kim Bush, Laura Carter, Tracci Dorgan, Kaley Faris, Laura Ferrazzano, O'Neal Mole (NP), Donna Norman, Dwight Norman, Andrea Raynor, and Ariana Suarez

Instructors: Kate Boggan, Anna Dunaway, Emma Ford (NP), Cat Hill (NP), Julie Robins, and Dr. Steven Simmons
Great Oak Equine Representatives: Executive Director, Ann Villa and Manager of Volunteer Services, Grace Flanders



Student Donna Norman showing off her equine handling skills during her final evaluation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

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AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA: The Aiken Horse Park Foundation (AHPF) is thrilled to congratulate the 12 recent graduates of the inaugural **Aiken Technical College's (ATC) Equine Technician Certification Program.**

Following their final evaluations held at Great Oak Equine Assisted Program's facilities in Aiken, SC the morning of Wednesday, December 6, 2023, the 11 present students received their official Equine Technician certificates from Dr. Steven F. Simmons, EdD, ATC's Dean of Technical and Continuing Education. The 12th student, O'Neal Mole, could not be present for the ceremonies as he is in the midst of travel preparations for

his new position with a professional operation in Wellington, FL, which he acquired during the course of the semester.

Since December of 2021, the AHPF has been working alongside ATC to develop the Equine Technician Course, which welcomed its inaugural cohort in September of 2023. Beginning with intimate meetings at the "Jack's House" show office, focus groups of local industry professionals got together to give their insights into what the equine industry is starving for: motivated individuals with the safety skills and general equine knowledge to work in a barn and be an asset to their farm's program.

Since then, the AHPF was able to provide support for this amazing project by connecting the ATC faculty with equestrian industry leaders including: Emma Ford - Olympic Groom & co-author of *World Class Grooming*, Cat Hill - Equine Management Business professional & co-author of *World Class Grooming*, Anna Dunaway - Equine Nutritionist Purina Animal Nutrition, and Julie Robins - Founder of the Horsemanship Academy, all of whom served as adjunct professors in the Equine Technician Course. The AHPF's own Director of Marketing & Communications, Kate Boggan, also served as a guest lecturer over the course of the semester.

In July of 2023, the AHPF presented ATC with a \$10,000 check donation from proceeds of the 2023 Aiken Charity Horse Shows to aid in the development of the Equine Technician Program. Thanks to Aiken Technical College Foundation scholarships, the course was free for South Carolina residents.



(Front row, L-R) Course Instructors Kate Boggan, Emma Ford, Anna Dunaway, and Julie Robins with the Equine Technician students following their final evaluations

By the end of the 12 week course, students were expected to be proficient in the following skills:

- Recognize common equine behavior
- Be familiar with basic equine anatomy
- Handling horses safely and confidently
- Gain experience in barn management and stall cleaning
- Develop grooming techniques
- Understand the basics of equine nutrition
- Identify and address common health concerns
- Perform basic first aid

- Develop interpersonal communication skills

Following the completion of their evaluations, and asked to provide their own feedback students remarked:

"I come from the world of professional sailing, and I have to say, this is a masters class. You truly have a team of world class instructors."

- Dwight Norman

"I want to have my own horse one day and this course truly helped me realize what all is involved in horse ownership. I feel much more prepared."

- Andrea Raynor

"I felt like I've gained so much knowledge on what I don't know. That has allowed me to ask better questions and build on what I've learned."

- Donna Norman

"I took this class to get a refresher, as I've had a very big gap between my horse interactions. And I was right, a lot of things have changed in the years that I've been out of the horse world. So I was able to refresh the old knowledge and learn a lot of new stuff."

- Kim Bush



Another critically important aspect to the success of the inaugural course was the generous collaboration with Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs. Great Oak offered their facilities as the space for the students to fulfil their hands on lab portion of the class. In addition, each student was required to complete 20 volunteer hours outside of class time, 10 of which were required to be completed at Great Oak. This gave the students a feel for different barns and different management styles they may encounter across the industry.

"Our partnership with Great Oak has been fantastic. The quality of the instructors has been great, but then being able to come out and put your hands on a horse... without that it would be like trying to teach someone to be a welder without them ever welding."

- Dr. Steven F. Simmons, EdD

The Aiken Horse Park Foundation is honored to have been a part of this wonderful program and would like to thank everyone involved that has offered support, not only this past semester, but in the years of planning leading up to the actualization of the course. We look forward to many more semesters of assisting the Aiken equestrian community to come and are grateful for the opportunity to fulfil our mission of promoting Aiken's equestrian way of life and encouraging the community's civic, educational, and charitable endeavors.

For more information on both Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs and the Aiken Technical College, click the links below.



Our programs change lives and foster unbridled personal growth, independence, and confidence for our students.

We share our knowledge to empower those of all ages with disabilities through learning and engagement for lifelong impact.

Knowledge + Respect + Impact



Aiken Technical College Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports Aiken Technical College in South Carolina, USA. Its primary mission is to raise funds to provide scholarships, grants, and other forms of financial assistance to students in need, as well as to support the college's educational programs and facilities.

Aiken Educational Sessions USEA Groom's Program



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ahp_foundation As we have been overwhelmed by the great interest in the USEGrooms Association Series at Bruce's Field, we have expanded the sign up possibilities from 40 to 60! The online sign up is not necessary, you can also come without the sign up, but it will speed up the check-in for everybody. So click the link in our story highlight "Grooms' class" to sign up for the upcoming Tuesdays. We look forward to welcoming you all! Next session will be held by Stephanie Simpsons (@stephsimpson15), Boyd Martin's head Groom on February 21st (06:30 pm to 08:00 pm at Bruce's Field, please bring your own chair).

Join us again, Winter 2024 for the USEA Groom's Program Aiken Educational Sessions run by Emma Ford - Olympic Groom & co-author of *World Class Grooming*.

More details to come soon!

We hope you'll join us for #AnEventLikeNoOther

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2023 Park Partners



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Established in 2013 by the late R. Bruce Duchossois, the Aiken Horse Park Foundation received its IRS 501(c)(3) tax exempt status in November 2014, with a mission to promote Aiken's equestrian way of life and to encourage the community's civic, educational, and charitable endeavors

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