



## **Career Opportunity Workshop Report**

**Meredith Baker**

**2006 USDF National Winner**

**USEF Youth Sportsman's Award**

In June 2007, I was fortunate to travel to Lexington, Kentucky to attend the USEF Career Workshop that was organized for the national winners of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) Youth Sportsman's Charter Award national affiliate winners. I was honored by the United States Dressage Federation as the 2006 USDF National Winner. The workshop was a fun-filled week of traveling to different farms around Lexington, meeting many equine professionals, and learning more about the USEF and its affiliate organizations. The purpose of this workshop is to learn about the many different careers in the equine industry. However, in addition to learning how I can turn my love of horses into a job, I also learned about the different breeds and disciplines.

My favorite activities were visiting the Kentucky Equine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Center (KESMARC) and visiting Keeneland Racetrack. We toured the KESMARC facility and saw the swimming Pool, Aquatred, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy chamber, and stabling facilities. The Aquatred is very much like a treadmill under water. We were able to see horses working in each of these, and spoke with Kirsten Johnson, one of KESMARC's owners, about the benefits of their different rehabilitation programs. I also enjoyed watching the morning workouts at Keeneland Racetrack. I had previously never had the opportunity to see up close a racehorse run on the track. They look a lot slower on television! We also got to tour the racetrack and the incredible auction house.

We also spent a day at the Kentucky Horse Park learning about the different National Organizations that reside on the grounds. We toured the USDF National Educational Center, and also learned about the different departments within the USEF. Talking to the USDF and USEF staff was very interesting and informative. Since I am the U.S. Pony Club representative on the USEF Youth Council as well as the Region 1 Representative on the USDF Youth Executive Board, I have been able to use what I learned about the inner workings of the organizations in these roles.

While the activities were wonderful, I enjoyed spending time with the other national winners. There were six national winners at the workshop, including myself. All of us came from different backgrounds and disciplines. We instantly bonded through our common love of horses. It was fascinating to talk to each other about our horses, as each of us was knowledgeable and rode different breeds. I learned a lot about the other disciplines and breeds through talking to the other winners.

I am so happy that I was able to attend this workshop. I met many interesting people and made friends from across the country. I encourage any junior rider who is active in the USDF and their local community to apply for this award.