

Claire's Story

In September of 2011 the horse community lost Claire Mawdsley in an automobile accident. She was a 21 year old senior at Virginia Intermont College in Bristol, Virginia. She was majoring in Equine Studies. At the time of the accident, Claire was returning to school from the Middleburg Classic where she worked for Winter Hill Farm that week.

Claire was an eclectic and well-rounded young lady. She was successful in many areas of her young life. She was not given ample opportunities to show and compete as a junior, but she had dedicated herself to learning and acquiring skills that would expand her horse knowledge and proficiency. She spent hours grooming and caring for her horse as well as top show horses. Claire recognized the importance of bonding with the horses she cared for. She capitalized on her experiences and hard work and was able to compete at IHSA Nationals in 2011.

Additionally, Claire was a motivated student. She valued academic success. Her performance in the classroom was recognized by Virginia Intermont when Claire received the college's first posthumous degree in its 130 years. She would often encourage the junior riders at Winter Hill to make sure they valued their educational opportunities.

Claire was also a widely liked "people-person." She understood the importance of her relationships with friends and family. She worked hard to spend time with the people she cared about while balancing horse show responsibilities and her school work.

The Scholarship and Rider Recognition program is named after Claire Mawdsley because she would have been the perfect candidate for the program. She was a focused and talented young lady who did not have extensive opportunities to ride and show full time, but she had ambition. She was the embodiment of the values we hope to instill and promote through this program for junior exhibitors: you do not have to make a choice between being competitive and being well-rounded. You can have it both ways.

