

## Catherine Maher, ANSC Student & UConn Equestrian Team Captain

*By: Antonia Brunetti, ANSC Junior*

Catherine Maher is an Animal Science senior fulfilling her dream career – training horses. Catherine was wary on applying to UConn afraid she would not get accepted. Once she did she was ecstatic to be invited into the animal science community where the big University with small town feel made her right at home. Since her freshman year, she has enjoyed riding on the Equestrian Team, being captain, and becoming a Teaching Assistant (TA) at the UConn equine facilities. She soon fell into her place of work during her sophomore/junior year and realized being in the barn was where she needed to be. Catherine has been on the team since sophomore year and was excited when people suggested she try out for team captain. The vote was taken into strong consideration by Alena Meacham, who is the Equestrian Team’s coach, and Catherine got the position. As team captain she is responsible for making sure tasks are done correctly and on time at the equine facility. She has over 30 teammates she guides and who provide support and help. As captain she learned her leadership and new public speaking skills and took on a lot of responsibility. Catherine feels that “being on the team is like being within a new family, within family there is drama and fun, but this team is so much more than riding and there is a tremendous amount of support between all of my teammates”. The Equestrian team practices alongside the community riders. Some of the more experienced riders have a lesson once a week and help exercise other horses. Her advice for anyone who wants to join the team is that it is a commitment to make, but it is not an overpowering obligation. “We have so many students from pre-vet, pre-med, and sororities that have awesome grades and still have a strong commitment to being on the team”. The team is involved in community service and actively participates in Relay for Life. The team competes in Regionals, Zones, and even had individual riders make it to Nationals. There are clinics held in the fall and spring with outside professionals to help students improve their riding.



Catherine has accomplished so much at UConn, but her greatest moment is starting a middle school and high school riding team as her Independent Study project and it has skyrocketed into a wonderful program for younger students. Not only does she run the Interscholastic Equestrian Association team (IEA) she is an assistant trainer at a local family barn. She has gotten very good at balancing her exciting days with all the driving back and forth but she loves what she does. She states “knowing your passion is a dime a dozen, not everyone can find something they love as easily as I had”. Catherine is sad to graduate in May 2014, but she is going to come back to help out with the IEA team. She also will have her job close to UConn where she is an assistant trainer and the employer is building an apartment for her on property so she can reside there. She is looking forward to starting her career but she will dearly miss the hustle and bustle at the University of Connecticut equine facilities.

