

Local Riders Prepare to Dazzle at Vermont Summer Festival!

By Lindsay Brock/Jump Media

The Vermont Summer Festival, nestled just south of the Green Mountain National Forest in the hills of East Dorset, VT, welcomes riders from all corners of the world for six weeks of show jumping, hunter and equitation competition each summer.

However, one doesn't have to go too far afield to find talent. Here's a look at five riders who call the Northeast home, and are planning to leave their mark on the 2017 Vermont Summer Festival.

Elizabeth Kirby Mendham, NJ

Amateur jumper and hunter rider Elizabeth Kirby first picked up the reins when she was four years old. Whether it was riding or playing with horses in the paddocks at her aunt and uncle's farm, Kirby, now 26, was hooked on horses from the beginning.

While Kirby's parents are not involved in the horse industry, they support her equestrian goals, and her passion has become their passion.

"They are my biggest supporters," said Kirby. "They may not be riders themselves, but they are on the sidelines at every horse show and I hear them clapping the loudest every time."

Kirby attended Lafayette College in Easton, PA, and graduated in 2013 with a degree in psychology. Upon completion of her formal education, Kirby returned to riding and has found success in the jumper and hunter rings at horse shows along the east coast of the U.S., including the Vermont Summer Festival.

In 2016, Kirby and her horse, *Reservation*, topped the 3'3" Amateur-Owner Hunter divisions at both the Skidmore College Saratoga Classic Horse Shows and the Vermont Summer Festival to claim the Adirondack-Green Mountain Challenge trophy, a perpetual award that combines points from the two shows.

"It was really something special to win that last year, but I enjoy being at the Vermont Summer Festival in general," said Kirby, who rides with trainer Kristen Montevicchio. "My horses go the best at the Vermont Summer Festival. I have been coming for seven years and I love how everything runs smoothly, the surroundings are beautiful, and the management really cares about the riders and the horses." Ω

Amy Momrow Albany, NY

Amy Momrow was nine years old when she took her first lesson alongside her sister. She lessoned at a barn near Albany under the tutelage of trainers Monty Kelly and his mother, Sandy. Momrow didn't know it then, but one day she would be a professional rider and trainer with that very same team at Stepping Stone Farm, still based in northern New York state.

After a successful junior career, she took a brief break from riding to attend Sienna College, also located in Albany. In 1999, however, she picked up right where she left off—chasing her riding dreams. She joined Stepping Stone Farm as a trainer and has climbed her way to the top of the grand prix and hunter ranks.

Despite her personal success in the show ring, Momrow credits Stepping Stone Farm's growth to teamwork, saying, "We work together every second of every day and that is how we make it all happen."

At the Vermont Summer Festival, Momrow is a rider to watch in both hunter and jumper competition. In 2016, she earned a third-place finish in the \$15,000 3'3" NEHJA Hunter Derby, presented by Land Rover Experience, and will be back in 2017 with the Stepping Stone Farm team in tow.

"We are always excited to make it back to the Vermont Summer Festival each year," said Momrow. "As a rider, I look forward to the grand prix and hunter derby offerings, but for the barn as a whole, we are able to bring every level rider. There are classes for our five-year-old walk-trot rider, our equitation riders, and everything in between. We are especially excited to see some of our junior riders qualify for equitation finals in the 'Equitation Tuesday' classes." Ω



Elizabeth Kirby and *Reservation* competing at the 2016 Vermont Summer Festival.



Amy Momrow riding *Curb Appeal* in one of the popular hunter derby offerings at the 2016 Vermont Summer Festival.

All photos by
Andrew Ryback Photography

Katie Tyler Old Lyme, CT

Katie Tyler found horses through her father's connections at a therapeutic riding center, which later morphed into pony club and competing as an eventer.

"My father was on the Board of Directors at the center, and when he would go to his evening meetings, I would beg to tag along," said Tyler. "While he was working, I was riding!"

A 2016 graduate of St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY, Tyler competes under trainers Mattias and Emmy Tromp of North Salem, NY. Tyler, 24, currently has her sights set on moving up to the grand prix ranks.

Tyler's string of horses will spend the early part of their summer at the Vermont Summer Festival where she has already experienced success in jumper competition, including a sixth-place finish in the \$30,000 Vermont Summer Special Grand Prix riding *Wild Card* in 2016.

"My goal for the end of the summer is to be consistent and competitive in the smaller grand prix classes," said Tyler. "The Vermont Summer Festival is the perfect place for me to accomplish that goal and move my horses up. It is a very competitive circuit with well-built courses, but I won't be over-facing any of my horses.

"I love to show in Vermont," continued Tyler. "Every year when I go there, something has been done to improve the horse show. Sometimes they are little things, but they are huge improvements. Not every show cares that much." Ω

Abigail Brayman Charlestown, RI

Eighteen-year-old Abigail Brayman is hoping to make the most of her last year as a junior rider. With her sights set on success at year-end equitation finals, she will be one to beat in the ever-popular 'Equitation Tuesday' classes at the Vermont Summer Festival.

Brayman has been riding since before she can remember. Her mother, Wendy, runs Hunter Ridge, a boarding and training facility in Ashaway, RI, while her father, Matt, can be spotted announcing or running in-gates at horse shows along the east coast of the U.S.

"My first pony was named *Forever*," recalls Brayman. "She was white, fat, and didn't have her lead changes, but she was perfect. Then, my first small

pony would buck me off at the first jump every time off the left lead."

Despite a challenging start, Brayman's early rides established her skills as a pony rider and she now trains with Missy Clark and John Brennan of North Run in Warren, VT. Following in the footsteps of her older sister, she took her first lesson at North Run three years ago and has since found success in the equitation ring.

"Missy has improved my position and my ability to adjust the horse better," said Brayman. "My goal for this year is to have a successful indoors season and make the second round in all the major equitation finals. A ribbon would be lovely, but I really just want to make the second round."

Thanks to her participation in on-line high school, Brayman graduated in three years and will be packing her bags for Oklahoma State University to compete on their equestrian team this fall. Ω

Alissa Kinsey Danville, NH

Amateur rider Alissa Kinsey's earliest memory of horses is having them in her backyard throughout her childhood. Growing up with a family that loved horses and rode recreationally at every opportunity, Kinsey had a pony waiting for her the day she was born.

At her first horse show, however, at the age of four, Kinsey had the ride on a 17-hand horse. "I begged the owners to let me ride him, and I showed him in a couple flat classes and won," recalls Kinsey. "My leg didn't even go past the flap of the saddle, but after that I was hooked. I didn't want ponies, I wanted horses!"

Kinsey started competing regularly at the age of 16, and has since been extremely successful in amateur jumper classes, including a victory in the \$2,500 Marshall & Sterling Adult Jumper Classic during the 2016 Vermont Summer Festival riding her own *Capella 37*.

"I just enjoy going to the horse shows and doing well," she said. "I live to show and I have been competing at the Vermont Summer Festival for years. It is a laid-back show, but run very professionally. You can count on things happening when they are supposed to, as well as constant and exhibitor-friendly improvements."

This year, Kinsey is stepping out of her comfort zone in the jumper ring and will bring a new mount to the Vermont

Summer Festival, a mare named *Whatever*, to compete in the hunter ring. Kinsey considers it her "pipe dream" to compete in the \$15,000 3'3" NEHJA Hunter Derby during the final week of the six-week circuit. Ω



Katie Tyler and *Wild Card* in the Grand Prix ring at the 2016 Vermont Summer Festival.



Abigail Brayman riding *Cassini W* in equitation at the 2016 Vermont Summer Festival.



Alissa Kinsey and *Capella 37* on their way to victory in the Adult Jumper Classic during the 2016 Vermont Summer Festival.