

# **A Young Horse Whisperer: Monique Garrett first in Illinois Horse Judging, EHS FFA team second**

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville FFA Chapter placed second in Illinois Horse Judging and a catalyst behind that was EHS' Monique Garrett, who was the state's top individual. Teammate Maddie Berlemann placed third as an individual.

Monique Garrett without a doubt has a love of horses. This is how she describes her time with the horses: "For the short 15-16 seconds that I am in the arena for a barrel race, it feels like no one else exists and the rush and the connection with the horse is like no other! When others become too old physically to continue their passion of their sport, mine will last a lifetime because horse riding is for all ages. It will just be the type of riding that will change.

"A lot of people think that horse riding is not a sport but I challenge anyone who says that to come out and complete a jumping course or run a barrel or pole pattern. I am an equestrian and very proud of it. Living my life with horses has taught me so many things.... discipline, responsibility, passion, love, respect, honor, competitiveness, humility and defeat."

Monique said she loves the responsibility of training a horse.

“I love the challenge,” she said of training a horse. “I educate myself and go to every clinic that I can to further my knowledge in this horse life I lead. Horse trainer, jumper, barrel racer, pole bender, 4-Her, FFA officer, driver, horse, chicken, duck, goat, dog and cat owner - that is me, that is who I am. At first I wanted to be a vet especially when I got to participate in my first horse necropsy (similar to an autopsy but for a horse) but then I realized that there would be no time for what I love to do which is ride and train. I have decided to go into radiation therapy so I can use my money to open my own stable.”

Each year, she said she looks forward to the end of July where she shows her animals.

“My family knows to not ever plan a vacation that week because I wouldn’t go,” she said. “I love to show my animals. I have been very fortunate to work with Joe and Jackie King of Indian Hills Thoroughbred Farm in Edwardsville. I have assisted with the birth of foals, road galloping horses out and cleaned lots and lots of stalls. They have taught me a lot. I have been blessed with many people that have taught me along the way from instructors, leaders and advisors, friends and I appreciate them all!”

Monique said someone once told her that you need to pick one discipline and stick with it.

“I didn’t listen,” she said. “I have taught one horse to jump, drive, barrel race, pole bend and trail ride. Glitzy Girl is amazing and she is mine. It has always been my dream to race a 1D barrel horse and now owner, Bobbi Foiles, has given me the opportunity. We are in the learning process and Go Katie Go are working together and improving every day. It is very exciting.”

The EHS student believes everyone should be in 4-H and FFA.

“It will teach you so many things that you can use in life,” she said. “I have been competing in horse bowl and Hippology and horse judging since I was eight years until the present time. “Riding horses is not for everyone but if it is, it becomes a part of you....in your blood and never leaves.”

Monique started her love for horses at the age of 3 when she rode ponies in a circle at Relleke Pumpkin Farm. Monique almost had to be pulled off the horses she enjoyed it so much. From there came horse riding lessons, 4-H, FFA, riding other people’s horses, owning her own horse and now training horses.

4-H Introduced her to horse bowl, Hippology and horse judging. She and her team study from December to April for the competitions. She has qualified for state in Hippology every year.

In 2016, Monique placed first place in a four-state horse judging competition in Springfield at the annual Horse Fair. She was grand champion for many years in the 4-H Horse Show. She qualified for state last year in FFA for her SAE project. She has been awarded grand champion for many years at Madison County Fair for showing her animals.

She competes barrel races throughout the year, takes care of two horses, works, is an FFA officer, attends 4-H meetings, competed in FFA competitions and still manages to be in Honor Society.

“We are beyond proud!” her mom, Angie, said of her daughter. “To place first individual at state for FFA horse judging is just a payoff for a lot of hard work that has taken place over many years.”