



# Aspen Adams '16

A recent alumna blends her love of horses and education.

BY KRISTEN SCHMIDT  
PHOTOS BY JO McCULTY

**A**SPEN ADAMS' PARENTS figured their daughter would outgrow her obsession with horses. So, for a while as a kid, Adams rode neighbors' horses near her family's blueberry farm in southwest Michigan. The interest grew into a love, and Adams eventually got her own horse. Today, she spends all day, every day, with horses as the horse herd manager at The Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute in Wooster — and she's a proud alumna of the institute.

After graduating, Adams worked on a standardbred horse farm (think harness racing) in southern Illinois. Then she got a call from ATI about the herd manager job and returned to Wooster this past August. Now she guides students who have their own dreams of working with horses.

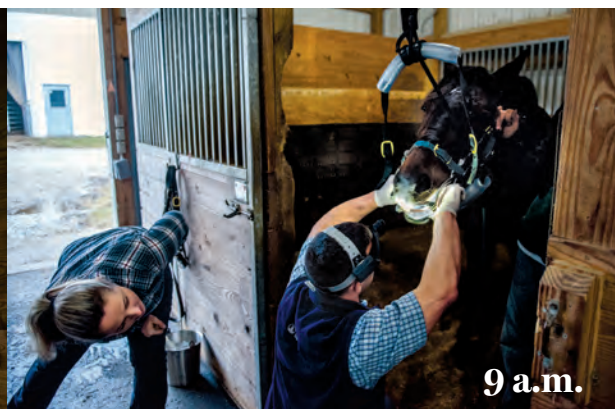
"Seeing students who have the drive, seeing them progress and find something they like, you feel like a proud mama," she says.

6 a.m.

**6 A.M.** I wake up and let Della, my German shepherd, out. She's queen of the castle. I live only about five minutes away from the barn. If there's an emergency and I'm needed, I want to be close enough that I can help.

**7 A.M.** This is probably the earliest I've ever had to start work, but it doesn't bother me. I get on the computer right away. I pop my head into the barn and see if students have any questions while they're feeding the horses.

**7:45 A.M.** Practicum begins. This is how students practice what they've learned in class. They do all the day-to-day chores — cleaning the stalls, watering, feeding, giving medicine and shots. We like to be experiential learners, so we let the students make mistakes and grow from that.



**9 A.M.** The vet comes to float teeth on our stallion and two client mares. Anytime the vet comes out, we stop everything and ask students to come watch and listen. The vet (Gabe Middleton '08 DVM) is very good at talking them through stuff. Horse teeth are continuously growing, and they can develop sharp points. Floating files down their teeth. The vet puts them under slightly so they're still standing but not distressed. If there's any unevenness in their teeth, the floating process makes them comfortable again. They'll eat better, and they won't be in pain.

**NOON** I usually go to lunch with other farm managers. I've tried to bring lunch and eat at my desk, but you've got the animals, the work, the students, the computer. It's nice to leave just so you can come back and be ready to go again. It's a good group. We all get along really well.

**10:20 A.M.**

**We start advanced breeding lab. This is my favorite time of day, because I love the breeding and stallion-handling process. Stallions have such big personalities, and I like all aspects of working with them. And, when foals are born, you experience the rewards of your work. There is gratification in knowing you played a role. With breeding, no two days are the same. Every time we go to the breeding shed, things are a little different.**

**1 P.M.** I work in the office. At my last job, I had zero administrative work. I was in charge of all the horses, and all I did was write down what I did, and we had an office assistant to handle billing. This job has required a transition. It makes me a more well-rounded individual. I keep a daily calendar book on my desk and open to the week so I can keep on top of stuff. I have lots of wall caddies and clipboards hanging. If I can't see it, I don't think about it.

**4:30 P.M.** I try to get out of here around this time unless there's a foaling emergency. When I do have to come back, I don't mind at all. Not having to come back — that's unheard of in a horse job. I also try to go to the gym every day. On weekends, we'll go out to the brewery in town. But on weekdays, I'll cook for myself, whatever is easiest. I'll catch up on TV — I watch "Grey's Anatomy" — and I'm in bed around 9 p.m. ✨