# Ledyard teen rider takes home awards at horse show



**Melissa Billings**
**Age** 15
**Hometown** Ledyard

**In the news**: Melissa Billings, 15, of Ledyard, is an accomplished equestrian competitor in the state. She recently took three first place awards and a champion award at the Connecticut Horse Show Association meet in East Windsor.

**A love of horses**: Melissa has been riding for more than six years and enjoys competing in jumping events. Although she doesn't have her own horse , she leases a horse named Ricky from the stable where she trains. She hopes one day to own a horse and a stable.

**A dedicated competitor**: Melissa trains with Mary Fischer, owner of Bit by Bit Stable in Uncasville. Fischer said Melissa owes her success in equestrian competition to her dedication to the sport. "She's a great kid and really loves working with horses," Fischer said. "She's dedicated and spends several afternoons each week to work with the horses and learn good riding habits." In addition to jumping, Melissa has competed in dressage.

**Quotable**: "I think working with animals teaches you a great deal and also is a great exercise program," Melissa said. "It's really good to be working with an animal like Ricky, because they're always there for you and become a really good friend. I'd suggest anyone looking for a sport where they can meet a lot of people, enjoy horses and compete with others their own age, try an equestrian sport."

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