

Senior tries her hand at farm work

DAVE BLANTON

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Some seniors' final projects serve as a perfect bridge between a longstanding interest and a future professional path.

When Mackenzie Smith was administering vaccinations for blackleg disease and giving dewormer medicine to cattle this spring, she found herself in a familiar setting, being around livestock and other animals.

Smith, who runs track and cross-country at KMHS, is pointing herself toward a career helping animals and farmers. She's enrolling in Clemson University to major in pre-vet studies in the fall.

In that program, she's expecting a demanding workload of biology, chemistry and math classes, and following her undergraduate years she'll face intense

competition to be accepted in one of the country's few schools of veterinary medicine programs.

Smith's senior project had her volunteering at the local cattle farm of a family friend, Chip McGill, where she learned the ropes about what it takes to raise and care for cattle and get them off to market.

She bluntly recounts how she used heavy rubber bands to perform castration of young male calves. She also recalls palpating the wombs of two pregnant cows on the farm, feeling the contours of newborn calves within with gloved hands.

"Most people aren't aware of how physically fit you have to be to work on a farm," Smith said a few weeks before graduation. "I consider myself pretty physically fit, but I learned I wasn't strong enough physi-



Mackenzie Smith

cally like for example to position a cow's head or even a calf's head into a head gate."

In all, Smith puts in about 20 hours at the Kings Mountain farm, making four trips.

"It was a great experience for me, working alongside Mr. McGill and learning what I could," Smith said. "I knew what a lot of the tools were, I just didn't know how to use them all."

Smith said she plans to return to the McGill farm often, if for nothing else to help thin out the coyotes, which are a pest to livestock farmers.

Smith says hunting and fishing are major hobbies of hers, pastimes she learned at her father's knee.

"We love to hunt whenever we can," Smith said. "That's our bonding time."

In school, Smith kept busy and earned top-notch grades. In addition to sports, she was an enthusiastic member of the Future Farmers of America and president of the InterAct Club, a Rotary International sponsored school group. She was also

a member of Beta Club and the National Honor Society and the National Technical Honor Society.

In fact, she did well enough in her high school biology courses to be exempt from having to take many of them in her freshmen and sophomore years at Clemson. Nevertheless, her undergraduate advisors are suggesting that in order to have the best shot to get in veterinary school, she should take the college level biology classes despite having the credit to skip over them.

Smith is taking it all in stride.

"I plan on taking the freshmen bio classes even though I'm exempted from them," she said. "It's probably the best thing for me because I understand they are far more challenging than the classes I did well in high school."

Vittoria returns to Italy

ELIZABETH STEWART

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Rome, Italy, is an amazing city.

Just ask Maria Vittoria, who returns home June 9 after graduation from Kings Mountain High School.

"I'm anxious to go back home but this year has been great in Kings Mountain," said the pretty and vivacious foreign exchange student.

What does she like best about Kings Mountain? She has made lots of friends and expects to keep the mailman busy with letters back and forth to them and to Kaye Jolly, her American "mom" with whom she has lived the past school year.

Maria, 18, will be going back to high school in Rome and after graduation will return to the United States to enroll in college.

"Everything's different in Kings Mountain," she says. The Eternal City, Rome, has a population of 5 million people. Kings Mountain has a population of about 11,000. In Rome she has a choice of five high schools to attend: a linguistic school where she will probably continue to focus on Spanish; and schools that focus on classical, artistic, and scientific areas of study.

At KMHS Maria has studied Spanish and she has been active in the Spanish club. She speaks English, French, and Italian fluently.



MARIA VITTORIA

"After another year of high school I may decide to major in Spanish in college," said Maria, the daughter of Vincenzo and Angela Vittoria. She has two sisters she has missed this year but she will have plenty to tell them about her visit in America and particularly Kings Mountain.

Her Kings Mountain "family" has taken her to Myrtle Beach, SC and to the mountains. She loves Italian food and has found a real taste of sweet tea. She plans to take that recipe to her Mom in Rome.

Has she met a special boyfriend in Kings Mountain?

"I have been meeting wonderful people in Kings Mountain," she said.

Can't-miss grad gifts

Graduation season is a time for celebration as students prepare to face the next phase of their lives. Graduation parties are in full swing, and people may find themselves attending one or more of these festive occasions.

Party guests and graduation well-wishers may want to bring gifts for the guests of honor, and the following are a few ideas that newly minted grads may appreciate now or in the near future.

Travel

Graduates enter a time of transition between graduation and their pursuits of a career or additional schooling. The summer that follows graduation is filled with free time for many recent grads, making it a prime time to explore the world. If you know a new grad who harbors a sense of wanderlust, put together a travel-themed present complete with airline tickets, guide books, carry-on luggage, and some converted currency to use as spending money. You even can work with a travel agent to customize a trip you know your new grad will love.

Charitable giving

Philanthropic students may have spent their time as students helping others and supporting certain charities. If you are aware of a cause your graduate supports, think about making a donation to that organization. Couple that gift with an offering to volunteer. It's a great way to spend time with the graduate before he or she moves on to the next phase of life.

Professional wardrobe

Recent graduates may have interviews lined up or even a job awaiting them upon graduation, and such grads may need attire that is more befitting the business world. Suits, ties, colored shirts, briefcases, and the like will make thoughtful gifts for the budding professional. If you are unsure of sizes or style preferences, a gift card to a well-known retailer or specialty shop is a safe idea.

Automotive accessories

Many recent grads use the months immediately following graduation to take a road trip, making automotive accessories great gifts. Increase the enjoyment factor of a post-graduation road trip by treating the

grad to a subscription to a streaming satellite music service. This way grads can enjoy their favorite tunes no matter where their roads lead them.

Relaxation

School is not easy, so a gift to a spa for a massage or facial session can be a way to help your favorite graduate unwind once final exam and term paper season has officially ended. Exercise is another way to unwind from the rigors of a school year, so consider a health club membership for new grads whose campus gym access is no longer available.

Financial favors

Cash is a graduation gift that will never go out of style. It may not be fancy, but cash certainly comes in handy for graduates facing repayment of student loans or the costs of secondary schooling. If giving cash at a party, write a check payable to the graduate rather than giving loose cash that can be easily lost. Some grads even may have a Go Fund Me or Paypal account to help offset schooling costs, and gift givers can deposit money directly into such accounts if they so desire.

Congratulations Graduates!

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CONGRATS Graduates!

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own understandings;
think about Him in all your ways,
and He will guide you on the right paths.
- Proverbs 3:5-6 -

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