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Like a reining patter, life is about control and communication. At times you are spun around and forced to look at things from all angles, some lessons have taught me the importance of a good slow down to get perspective, others have left me sliding to a stop only to roll back and head in the opposite direction. As our Miami Equestrian Team President for 2 years, I have learned the importance of not only communicating with horses, but also with my fellow teammates and coaches. Through my IHSA experience, I have become a better leader by running our team, listening to teammate suggestions, and by working alongside some of the most amazing people I have ever known. Coming in as a freshman open western horsemanship and reining rider, I was not used to the team aspect of IHSA competition. Like many, I had only competed as an individual through breed competitions. Through the years I have learned what it is to be a good teammate. At shows I am a cheerleader, boot wiper, chap zipper, van driver, and most importantly that smiling face on the rail that supports you right lead or wrong. I never knew that you could get so much joy out of watching your teammates succeed and improve. Not only has the IHSA made me a better leader, it has taught me the true meaning of friendship. Whether it's a ride down to the barn, taking a new freshman around campus for a tour, or just a listening ear on a long trail ride, I have had the privilege of being part of the IHSA family and I am a better person for it.

This close-knit family has taught me patience when making big changes that affect others, the power of positive thinking when all else seems to be lost, humility when you roll back the wrong way on your first IHSA reining ride, determination when riding through pain, open-mindedness when learning another new way to accomplish a lead change, flexibility when the arenas are flooded and loyalty when everyday you realize that you are surrounded by extraordinary people that have your best interest in mind. It is hard for me to summarize all that the IHSA and its wonderful members and coaches have taught me. As a graduating senior, looking back I am so thankful for all the horse shows, countless lessons, executive board meetings, and social gatherings this organization has given me. Even more importantly, I will be leaving with mentors, friends, and so many wonderful memories that will help me find my way through my next pattern in life, full of more spins, circles, and roll backs that come along with growing up. So, I will end this pattern with a tip of my hat and a gracious thank you for all of the gifts the IHSA has given me that I will never forget.