

My name is Mia Valdez, I am 16 years old, a junior member at Keswick Hunt Club and a traditional, B graduate pony clubber. I am aspiring to complete my HA later on this summer.

I do not come from a legacy fox hunting family. I am a first generation junior member at Keswick Hunt Club. I was born in Chicago where people consider wide open spaces a small park. My mother, who is from Germany, had a Saddlebred that she was showing and she introduced me to horseback riding when I was 8 years old. All of this does not necessarily sound like a background story to become an advocate for land conservation, yet here we are.

My family has always been interested in sustainable living and at one point in time we were raising all of our own meat. My dad is from Guatemala and has a very different appreciation for nature than most Americans. This instilled an interest in land conservation long before I even started fox hunting.

I was very fortunate that my first trainer was an avid foxhunter and she invited me to join her at Deep Run Hunt Club on a junior day. Being a first generation foxhunter, experiencing those glorious, wide open spaces and learning about the importance of land conservation aids me to appreciate the world around me. I often marvel: How did I get so lucky?



Mia Valdez on “Bittersweet 14”, Middleburg Vixen Hunt 2023

Since becoming a junior member at Keswick Hunt Club I have been able to pitch and complete a wide variety of land conservation and wildlife preservation projects. As an avid foxhunter, nature and land conservation help to ensure that we not only have land to hunt on but also safe residence for our foxes.

In 2022 I first gained the opportunity to speak at Virginia's Capital about the importance of land conservation and impact that fox hunting has on our upcoming generations. Since then I have been able to collaborate with Virginia Department Of Wildlife And Resources Director, Ryan Brown to help broaden my message. Every year, the Junior foxhunters of Virginia cherish the "junior day". It is on junior day we are able to share our passion for foxhunting and the importance of land conservation with government officials.



Land conservation is near and dear to my heart, that is why in 2022, when I learned about the "Hunting Habitat Land Conservation Award", I jumped at the opportunity to create a submission. With the support of Keswick Hunt Club members and Masters I was able to create a winning submission. Mary Motley Kalergis even accompanied me to New York City to accept the award. It was such an honor.

As a 16 year old my efforts and dedication to land conservation are far from over. I plan to continue creating awareness and opportunities for young foxhunters to speak about the importance of foxhunting. I have been able to publish an article about our efforts at the capital in an international online fox hunting magazine. I have attached the article to my submission.

I have been lucky enough to apprentice under one of Keswicks finest whipper-in, Barclay Rives. I am also interning this summer with Mike Pearson and Delegate Amy Laufer to further learn about the workings of relationship building as a lobbyist and I plan to apply all I learn to my cause: Land Conservation and Fox Hunting. Land conservation is essential, without it, our beloved tradition and sport will not survive.



Mia Valdez whipping in, to Keswick's Huntsmen, Paul Wilson.



Keswick Territory, Spring 2024