Established in 1964, the Midwest Horseshoeing School has been producing skilled, well-educated farriers for more than 50 years.

The unique program attracts students from the United States and abroad. In addition to providing a comprehensive education in trimming and forging, award-winning instructors also lead in-depth studies in equine anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics.
Part of the University of Illinois

In February 2017, Steve Sermersheim and Diego Almeida, formerly co-owners of the Midwest Horseshoeing School, joined the staff of the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine. “Our rigorous educational program for farriers will gain exposure and prestige through affiliation with the University of Illinois,” said Almeida.

Instruction will continue in Divenon, Ill.
Learning Foundations

Students at the Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois are set up for success by learning the functional concepts of trimming and forging that reflect real-world applications. Every lesson is supported by solid theory of equine anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics.

The Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois is committed to educating horse owners about proper hoof care and the importance of choosing a knowledgeable and skilled farrier.

In addition, our instructors regularly work with veterinarians from across the region, giving students the opportunity to learn about lameness and diagnostic techniques.
Steve Sermersheim is an instructor at the Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois. He is a certified Journeyman Farrier with the American Farrier’s Association, and has attained his Therapeutic Endorsement. He is an approved Examiner for the American Farrier’s Association and is an Associate for the Worshipful Company of Farriers.

Steve is the lead farrier at Middlefork Forge at Illinois, a multi-farrier shoeing practice that’s part of the University of Illinois Veterinary Teaching Hospital serving central and east central Illinois.
Diego Almeida, CJF EE

Diego Almeida is the lead instructor at the Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois. In addition to being a Certified Journeyman Farrier with the American Farrier’s Association (AFA), Diego is an AFA Approved Tester and involved in farrier certifications across the United States and abroad. In addition to his involvement in AFA, Diego is an active member of the Land of Lincoln Horseshoers Association and the Indiana Farriers Association.

Diego’s background with horses began in Brazil, where he trained and competed in show jumping, dressage, and endurance from a young age. A graduate of Midwest Horseshoeing School himself, Diego was later recognized with the 2014 International Hoof Care Summit’s Rising Star Award. He is also a two-time recipient of the AFA’s J. Scott Simpson Outstanding Educator Award (2015 and 2016).
Instructor Shares His Passion for Shoeing Horses

“She asked, ‘Have you ever thought about going to school to put shoes on horses?’” he remembers. “I never really knew there was such a thing. I always thought it was a trade that a person learned from generation to generation.”

Not only did he find such a thing—the Midwest Horseshoeing School in Divernon, Ill., south of Springfield, acquired in February 2017 by the College of Veterinary Medicine—but he also became an integral part of its operation, spending the last seven years as a farrier instructor and eventually co-owner of the school.

As you’ve probably guessed, the landlady’s question didn’t just come up in conversation.

At the time, Almeida, a native of Brazil, had elected to come to the U.S. and take introductory courses at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, bringing him closer to the Chicago blues and jazz scene where he

By Jim McFarlin

He worked as a computer engineer, and dreamed of becoming a professional musician. But Diego Almeida says he didn’t discover his true calling, his life’s passion, until he contemplated an offhand remark from his landlord.
hoped to advance his guitar skills. His father, a now-retired colonel in the Brazilian army, is an avid horseman and still maintains a small stable on his farm.

“My Dad got me into horses,” he says. “I grew up around them. I rode mostly dressage and jumpers, endurance horses.”

Sometimes the homesick young student would reminisce about his equestrian childhood with the woman in whose home he rented a room. For his birthday, she decided to surprise him with some riding time at a nearby stable. So impressed was the stable owner with his skills that she offered Almeida a part-time job as a trail guide.

“It was very fun,” says Almeida, 36. “I met a lot of people. But then in the wintertime, there was no work.” Sensing his melancholy, his landlady made an off-the-wall suggestion as to one way he could stay around horses practically year-round. He researched online and found the Midwest school.

For Almeida, it was a shoo-in.

Although he undoubtedly works longer and more physically demanding hours now as a farrier and instructor, he says he grew disenchanted with his first career as a computer engineer.

“I’m pretty competitive, and I challenge myself a lot. If I make a horseshoe and I know I can do better, I’m ready for the next horse, because I want to try it again ... because every horse, every hoof, is different. That’s the beauty of it ... the fact that there’s always room for improvement.”

—Diego Almeida
“I didn’t want to be stuck in an office all day,” says Almeida. “I would walk in at 7:30 in the morning and I would leave at 8 o’clock at night, just sitting there all day. I’m a pretty active guy.”

So he jumped at the opportunity when Steve Sermersheim, owner of Midwest Horseshoeing School and Middlefork Forge (which also has been acquired by the college) and the man he calls his mentor, offered him an apprenticeship in 2010 after he completed what was then a 12-week course. Seven years as a farrier instructor later, Almeida has received the American Farrier’s Association Outstanding Educator Award—two years in a row.

“There’s room for caution, too. A successful farrier needs to be a bit of horse whisperer, too. “It is dangerous,” Almeida concedes. “You can get kicked or hurt around the horses, especially if you are dealing of his work. “I’m pretty competitive, and I challenge myself a lot. If I make a horseshoe and I know I can do better, I’m ready for the next horse, because I want to try it again.

“So even though you’re doing the same thing every day it’s still different, because every horse, every hoof, is different. That’s the beauty of it, there’s never a pinnacle. Some people say it’s a lifetime trade. That’s what I enjoy, the fact that there’s always room for improvement.”

“The thing about it is, it’s very challenging,” Almeida says.
with one that is not very well behaved. The job of a farrier is not to train horses, but you have to understand horsemanship. Especially nowadays, a lot of people who own horses don’t use them. They treat them like pets, so they’re never taught respect. Those are the ones that can potentially hurt you.”

In his “spare” time, Almeida maintains a reciprocal arrangement with a horseshoeing school in Colombia. “Every year we have one or two students from there, and we try to go there once a year to help the guys who can’t come because it’s so expensive. We’re helping them develop their certification process.

“No, I don’t sleep much.”

(Left) Almeida also brings a passion to his role as an instructor. He won the AFA’s J. Scott Simpson Outstanding Educator Award in both 2015 and 2016. (Right) Almeida is shown using some of the tools of a farrier’s trade: fire, anvil, hammer, and steel.
Curriculum

The Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois curriculum includes instruction on the anatomy and conformation of the horse with special emphasis on the lower limb, the diagnosis of faulty gaits, and conformational problems. Students will practice forge work on coke and propane forges, hoof repair and trimming, and shoeing for various disciplines.

Many breeds of horses will be shod to familiarize the student with a variety of types of shoeing. Some keg or factory shoes are used to acquaint students with their use. However, students will make many of their shoes from bar stock to be used on the horses scheduled each day. Forging practice throughout each of the courses will include a shoe display that demonstrates the student’s ability to modify horseshoes.
Throughout the course, students will be provided countless opportunities to learn and practice a variety of horseshoeing techniques. These exercises are an integral part of the course instruction due to the wide variety of shoeing methods employed by the successful professional farrier. For the students at Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois, learning which breeds and disciplines respond best to certain methods of shoeing is essential to successfully completing the course.
Learning Facility

The Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois contains a comfortable air-conditioned classroom with a smart board for lectures and webcasts, a modern indoor shop area, as well as a 2,500-square foot, covered outdoor shop area. Both shop areas are insect controlled. The shop is equipped with both propane and coke forges.

In addition to teaching students at our shop in Divernon, Ill., students will also receive instruction at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine in Urbana, Ill. Students will have access to expert faculty members and college laboratories, and will be involved in various equine exams.
Housing Facility

Furnished dorms with a common kitchen/study area are available for each session at a very reasonable rate. Dorm rooms are air-conditioned/heated. The dorm is located on the same property as the school. Students should bring bedding, towels, and any other personal belongings needed for their stay.
Our 20-Week Course

The Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois program teaches a 20-week certified farrier course, a cumulative program covering the introductory concepts of farriery to a comprehensive study of the equine anatomy and forging. For those who want to become professional farriers, we help you prepare for the American Farrier’s Association Certified Exam.

• Hours in session: Tuesday through Saturday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
• The school shop is open after regular school hours to allow students to perfect their skills.
• Certificates of Completion are issued to those who graduate.
Tools must be purchased by the student, such as:

- Rounding hammer
- Clipping hammer
- Tongs
- Knives
- Hand tools (nippers, clinchers, pull offs, crease nail pullers, rasps)
- Chaps
- and more

Costs could range from $1,200 to $1,500, depending on the brand. More details will be provided to students in acceptance materials.
TUITION INFORMATION
Deposit—$500
Tuition—$11,750
Housing—$1,250
TOTAL COST—$13,500

Note: Students who are accepted to the Midwest Horseshoeing School at Illinois must secure their spot within seven days of our offer by paying a non-refundable $500 deposit.
Our Schedule

We teach 20-week sessions twice a year. One session begins in August (second Tuesday) and one starts in February (first Tuesday).

See the latest details about our class schedule on our website: MidwestHorseshoeingSchool.com.
Financial Information

Are you ready to invest in a rewarding career taught by award-winning instructors? We accept credit cards and we offer flexible payment options:

• Pay in full in advance.

• Provide a 35% down payment; the remaining amount will be divided in five equal payments that will be made every four weeks, so that the entire amount is paid prior to completing the program.

• Provide a 35% down payment; the remaining amount will be divided in 11 equal payments that will be made on the first of each month over an 11-month period of time.
Connect with Us

Check us out on social media to see what it’s like to be a student at Midwest Horseshoeing School:

/app/MidwestHorseshoeingSchool

/Instagram @MidwestHorseshoeingSchool

/Twitter @midwesths
LEARN • PRACTICE • EXCEL

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