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Horse Journal

Volume 10 • Issue 1 • Winter 2014



Equus Awards Edition
Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council

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Membership Chair

Valerie Kasnick

membership@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Members at Large

Robert Adams, Karl Bastian, Patrice Doyle, Melissa

Kalembert, Ted Stashak, and Tracy Underwood

The Horse Journal Editorial Committee**Editor in Chief**

JoDean Nicolette, MD

editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Graphic Design

Lynn Newton

publications@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Advertising Director

Jessica Boyd

ads@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Photographer Extraordinaire

Marcie Lewis

Distribution Director

Valerie Kasnick

distribution@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Editor at Large

Joan Rasmussen

editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Column Editors

Lily Baker-Lubin

athelete@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Michelle Beko, DVM

vet@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Jessica Boyd

learner@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Mark Krug

husbandry@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Grant Miller, DVM

rescue@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Sarah Reid

trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Contact Us

Sonoma County Horse Council

PO Box 7157

Santa Rosa, CA 95407

583-2317

www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

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Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council – Home of the Equus Awards**Inside this Issue**

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**Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis**

Equus Hall of Fame Horse Romax Foldager shows off his USEF Festival of Champions cooler and Reserve Champion ribbons next to owner Riana Porter. Read more about Romax and the other Equus winners in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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A Message from the President



Dear Sonoma County Equestrians,

Welcome to the 2014 Equus Awards edition of the Sonoma County Horse Journal.

On March 22nd we will be hosting our tenth annual Equus Awards Banquet in the grand ballroom at the DoubleTree in Rohnert Park. We will be celebrating the accomplishments and contributions of four of our leading horsemen and women, and one very special horse. The food and drink, the company and camaraderie, the stories about our honorees, the silent auction, and the fabulous raffle all make for a very entertaining and fun evening. Your attendance also sends a powerful message about the continuing vitality of our local horse industry which employs thousands of Sonoma County residents and contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to our local economy. So please read on about this year's honorees and make your reservations soon. We will see you there!

As horsemen and women you all value our equine heritage and

the equestrian way of life in this wonderful county of ours. We all also know that this heritage and way of life face many challenges, whether in the form of regulation, creeping urbanization, or what have you, and to meet those challenges, we need to unify ourselves and speak with one powerful voice. One simple and effective way you can support the horse community besides joining the Horse Council and other horse clubs is **to participate in Sonoma State's fourth Equine Economic Impact Study** which is on-line now and is very easy to fill out. Just take a few minutes and visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/sonomaequine. This survey, which was commissioned and financed by the Horse Council, is **completely confidential** and Sonoma State personnel will compile the data from the many hundreds of respondents into one comprehensive report that will demonstrate the impact and importance of the horse industry to the Sonoma County economy. The individual responses will not be shared with anyone so you should feel free to provide Sonoma State with the most accurate facts and estimates that you can so that they can compile a comprehensive and reliable report that will be presented to the Board of Supervisors, among other policy makers, so that they can be reminded of the importance of their continued support of the horse community in Sonoma County. By participating in this survey, you can make a real contribution to the health and well-being of our equestrian way of life, and you will earn a chance to win \$250 in our survey participant drawing. Don't wait, just saddle up and do it now!

Thanks for your support!
Ron Malone, President

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Sonoma County Horse Council at Work

Horse Cabinet Update

Written by Greg Harder, Vice President



The September cabinet meeting went off without a hitch. After a quick Horse Council board meeting, we welcomed Valerie Minton of the Sonoma Resource Conservation District (SRCD). The SRCD is a reorganization of the Sotoyome and Southern Sonoma County RCDs. The RCDs are the only grass roots conservation delivery systems that identify local conservation problems and guide solutions on a volunteer basis. The Sonoma RCD covers 919,000 acres (>85% of Sonoma County) and includes the Russian River, Petaluma River, Sonoma Creek, Stemple Creek, and Gualala watersheds. I learned something new, there is a forty cent parcel tax that all landowners pay to fund this District, and the majority of their work is grant funded. After a brief introduction of the new Resource District, Valerie shared the subject matter of the workshop she recently held at the SRJC, Managing Mud and Manure in Equine Facilities—a problem that is near and dear to us all. Every winter we are “gonna do something about da mud.” At the workshop various techniques were presented such as pasture rotation, stall placement, composting, not overburdening the land with too many animals, riparian buffers, installing gutters, drains, and catchment systems, protecting and increasing vegetative covers... You get the idea. Valerie outlined the many great ideas that we never actually implement. The purpose of the workshop was to expose equine owners to solutions, but the RCD went one step further, inviting the land owners to call and request a one on one appointment for the representatives to come out and take a look. Don't worry they have nothing to do with any of the enforcement agencies. With the new LandSmart for Livestock program there are opportunities for us, we already paid for it, so let's use this resource to better our situation. For more information about this program, see the related article on p 16.

Valerie also shared what the RCD is doing about the water quality. One of the prime directives of the RCD is to change management practices to reduce land destruction and bad water. That being said, it has come to the federal government's attention that the levels of nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (Ph) flowing through the Laguna to the Russian River exceed all tolerances. “Da feds” have said, “Clean it up or pay through the nose,” to the tune of \$25k/day. The fine is to be levied against the city of Santa Rosa. That's an attention grabber! Our water is of the best quality in the state, unfortunately the storm runoff from the city is toxic.

The RCD is in the process of trying to put together California's first Water Quality Bank. The idea, taken from the Carbon Credit Model, is to change existing practices in the Laguna to lessen N and Ph runoff. The Horse Council is a part of this new model. We are devising projects and management practices that will further reduce some of the agricultural runoff. The Water Quality Bank will provide the money for the projects. Let it be clear, the source of the contamination is the city storm water system, not agriculture. The cost of upgrading the wastewater facility is tens of millions. The Bank will provide money, the projects will be built, the N and Ph will be reduced to acceptable levels, and all will be happy.

This presentation was a view from 10,000ft of one potential new water quality management tool used in our state to improve the water flowing into our rivers and streams. I see interaction with this important agency as an opportunity to secure funding, and answer the annual dilemma, “What we gonna do with da mud?”


Please give Valerie or Kari a call at the RCD for more ideas or arrange for a site visit at 569-1448. For more information about programs or what the RCD can do for you, visit www.sonomarc.org.


The next cabinet meeting will be **January 8, 2014**. Hope to see you at the campfire.

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The Equine Esquire

Column editor Patrice Doyle, JD, Board of Directors

Riding on the Road: Law and Common Sense

There may be times when you need to ride on a public thoroughfare. If so, you'll need to know the rules of the road, and apply some basic common sense.

Rules of the road

You may be surprised to learn that the California Vehicle Code contains three sections specifically addressing equestrians riding on a roadway. They afford protections to you and your horse, as well as duties for you to uphold.

Ca Vehicle Code § 21050 states, "Every person riding or driving an animal upon a highway has all of the rights and is subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle by this division and Division 10 (commencing with § 20000), except those provisions which by their very nature can have no application." As a horseback rider on a roadway, the California Vehicle Code considers you a driver on the road. Therefore, you are required to follow all applicable traffic laws. One of the most fundamental practices you can do is simply yield to cars and stop at traffic lights/signs. This not only keeps you and your horse safe, but removes the uncertainty of what a driver might assume you will do next.

The second relevant code is Ca Vehicle Code § 21759. This law states, "The driver of any vehicle approaching any horse drawn vehicle, any ridden animal, or any livestock shall exercise proper control of his vehicle and shall reduce speed or stop as may appear necessary or as may be signaled or otherwise requested by any person driving, riding or in charge of the animal or livestock in order to avoid frightening and to safeguard the animal or livestock and to insure the safety of any person driving or riding the animal or in charge of the livestock." As equestrians, we know that many people are simply unfamiliar with horses and their worldview. They shy at objects and noises that we, as riders, would only anticipate. However, if you are on horseback and clearly indicate to a driver of a car that they need to slow down or stop to avoid a problem, then the driver needs to follow your direction. If the driver fails to respond and an injury occurs, the driver may be found liable for damages that result from the accident. Damages could include injury to you, your horse, and your personal property. More specifically, you could be compensated for medical bills, veterinary bills, loss or diminution of the value of your horse, and pain and suffering.

Ca Vehicle Code § 21805 pertains to right of way. It states:

(a) The Department of Transportation, and local authorities with respect to highways under their jurisdiction, may designate any intersection of a highway as a bridle path or equestrian crossing by erecting appropriate signs. The signs shall be erected on the highway at or near the approach to the intersection, and shall be of a type approved by the Department of Transportation. The signs shall indicate the crossing and any cross marks, safety devices, or signals the authorities deem necessary to safeguard vehicular and equestrian traffic at the intersection.

(b) The driver of any vehicle shall yield the right-of-way to any horseback rider who is crossing the highway at any designated equestrian crossing, which is marked by signs as prescribed in subdivision (a).

(c) Subdivision (b) does not relieve any horseback rider from the duty of using due care for his or her own safety. No horseback rider shall leave a curb or other place of safety and proceed suddenly into the path of a vehicle which is close enough to constitute an immediate hazard.

The yellow equestrian crossing signs we find throughout Sonoma County are for our safety and alert drivers that we have the right-of-way. But remember your good common sense. As a rider, you are required to wait until you and your horse are able to cross safely. If you proceed in an unsafe manner and cause an accident, you may be liable for the resulting damages.

Common sense and the roadway

As a horse owner or horse property owner, you can be held liable for negligence if you fail to keep your horse contained and it causes an accident. Therefore, it is imperative that fences be inspected and repaired to not only limit liability, but also avoid heartbreak should an unfortunate accident occur. You could also be held negligent if you tie your horse to your trailer and it becomes loose on a roadway, and injuries result to someone else.

When riding after dark you will need to illuminate you and your horse. Just as it would be illegal to drive a vehicle after dark without lights, it is also illegal to ride an animal on public streets after dark without some form of lighting.

Drinking while riding your horse can also get you into obvious trouble. You may not know, however, that it is possible to be charged with a DUI while riding your horse on a public street. You could also be charged with public intoxication.

Riding your animal on a public thoroughfare can be done safely and legally. Just remember that your horse is treated the same as a car. If you obey all the traffic laws just as you would in a motorized vehicle, then you should have no worries when riding your four-legged friend.

Patrice Doyle is an associate attorney at Kornblum Cochran Erickson Harbison, LLP, and has been an avid horsewoman since childhood. She can be of assistance in guiding you through equine-related legal issues, and can be reached at (707) 544-9006.

<p>KORNBLUM•COCHRAN KCEH ERICKSON•HARBISON</p> <p>Attorneys at Law Kornblum/Cochran/Erickson/Harbison, LLP A Partnership of Professional Corporations and an Individual</p> <p>1388 Sutter Street, Suite 820 San Francisco CA 94109</p> <p>50 Old Courthouse Square, Suite 601 Santa Rosa CA 95404</p>	<p>Patrice A. Doyle Attorney at Law</p> <p>Email: patrice@cochranerickson.com</p> <p>Telephone: (707) 544-9006 Facsimile: (707) 544-8213 Web: www.cochranerickson.com</p>
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Sonoma County Events

Dressage in the Wine Country

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Treasurer | Photos: Marcie Lewis



Ladies' sidesaddle with Erika Jansson

A celebration of the Sport Horse took place on September 7 as the Sonoma Chapter of the California Dressage Society presented Dressage in the Wine Country. A heat wave did not deter the crowds from attending this year's show at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds. The gates opened at 1pm to an equestrian shopper's paradise, with vendors from several states offering saddles, jewelry, art, riding attire, and even equestrian underwear. In addition to shopping, several clinics were offered, covering topics ranging from the practical (saddle fit, horse-shoeing) to the whimsical (Can your horse paint with wine?).

Attendees were treated to Western Dressage demonstrations, presented by Campana Ranch Training Stables with Sher Bell Boatman. Western Dressage melds the principles of Classical Dressage and Western horsemanship. The result is a solid foundation for the Western horse and horseman in disciplines such as Cutting and Reining, as well as working cattle on the open range.

The Equi-Ed Wounded American Veterans Equestrian (WAVE) Project gave a driving demonstration with its Haflinger pony, Mike. Equi-Ed is a local therapeutic horsemanship center whose mission is to use the therapeutic power of the horse to enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities. Carriage driving provides an alternative to riding, allowing many to enjoy horses who would otherwise be excluded due to physical or mental challenges.

The beer and wine tasting opened at 4pm to an enthusiastic crowd. The combination of the shaded site and refreshing beverages were a hit on this hot day! Anything chilled was particularly popular. Over twenty wineries and breweries offered up tastings of their finest, including the equestrian-themed Red Mare Wines and 14 Hands Winery.

The heat of the day gave way to a rare balmy Sonoma County evening, and at 7pm, the show began with the much-anticipated

demonstration of jousting by La Compagnia del Cavallo (The Company of the Horse). Riders in full armor demonstrated jousting techniques as they competed for the hand of fair Justine. Justine, dressed in Renaissance garb, was mounted sidesaddle on her own trusty steed. Announcer Riyad Koya explained the technicalities of the sport to the crowd. In days of old, jousting was considered a training exercise and a spectator sport. While the potential for injury looks great, the most commonly incurred injury is a broken hand. Eleven-foot long poplar lances are used to strike a target, typically a small shield ("encranche") strapped to the joustier's left shoulder. Extra points are earned if the lance breaks on impact. From the number of splinters flying through the air, it seemed like a lot of extra points were earned during the exhibition! At the end Justine, with the assistance of the cheering crowd, selected the winner by bestowing upon him a single red rose.

Erika Jansson next gave a stunning exhibition of Ladies' side-saddle while riding Rimer, a dashing Friesian gelding owned by Tracy Underwood of Santa Rosa Equestrian Center. Resplendent in wine-colored sidesaddle attire, Erika urged on the cheering crowd as she demonstrated a variety of riding maneuvers including cantering and passage, all while perched side-saddle wearing a flowing dress. Riding aside, which was developed in European countries in the Middle Ages, allowed women to ride while wearing fine clothing in modest style. Erika's demonstration showed how much grace, athleticism and, yes, balance can be achieved while riding sidesaddle.

A musical interlude followed as Cantiamo Sonoma, a seventeen-member vocal ensemble, rose to the equestrian theme by performing a very elegant version of Camptown Races. This was followed by the National Anthem, and the Presentation of the Flag



Combined Driving with Frank and Marlies Leutz



by the Painted Ladies Rodeo Performers of Sacramento. The precision drill team, mounted on Paint horses (hence the name of the group, I hope), put on an exhilarating and fast-paced performance while carrying American flags. One horse apparently had his fill of noisy grandstands, evening lighting, and waving flags and, to use

some wine country parlance, popped his cork and did some impromptu and unrehearsed rodeo-style airs above the ground! Showing considerable grit, the rider remained in the saddle and the drill was completed successfully. The speed, splashy Paints, and the red-white-and blue bling worn by riders and their mounts alike, made this group a crowd-pleaser.

From Templeton, Ca, German native Frank Luetz and his wife Marlies next demonstrated the sport of Combined Driving with a four-in-hand of German riding ponies. This event, which became an official equestrian sport in the 1970's, takes place over three days, with the speed and complexity increasing each day! Adding to the excitement was the inclusion of "Dexter," a four year old grey, who had only been in carriage for four months and this was his first public appearance. His older teammates helped guide him along as they navigated the course—although Dexter had a few "moments," making the outcome of the demonstration seem uncertain at times! The agility and deft navigating skills left the crowd cheering as the team and coach negotiated a course of cones and barrels, making clean turns at high speed in tight spaces. Mr. Luetz's informative and entertaining dialogue during the performance added to the audience's enjoyment and knowledge. All the ponies in the team endeared themselves to the crowd, with Dexter earning a special place in many hearts for his bravery during his first performance.

Following the excitement of the Carriage Driving was the stately and disciplined Grand Quadrille, consisting of four stallions performing Classical Dressage movements. Quadrille is defined as team riding, such as the Spanish Riding School and the Cadre Noir. While the Painted Ladies thrilled the crowd with speed and splash, the Grand Quadrille impressed with precision and grace. Led by Allison Mathy of Lyric Dressage, the stunning Lusitano and Andalusian horses and their riders were smartly turned out for their lovely performance.

Modern Dressage followed Classical with the next rider, Jaclyn Pepper. Jaclyn is a member of the USDF Region 7 team that recently won gold at the 2013 North American Junior/Young Rider Championships in Kentucky. Mounted on Taboo, her thirteen year old KWPN horse (Dutch Warmblood), she performed a FEI Young Rider Freestyle demonstration. The crowd cheered as Taboo displayed his athleticism, performing difficult moves such as lead changes every two strides and a pirouette.

Wrapping things up was the "Despicable Me" segment. Chelsey Sibley and her Warmblood mount brought innocent charm to their Grand Prix Freestyle performance. With the horse sporting a pink and white unicorn horn, pink streamers in its tail, and sparkles on every part of its anatomy right down to its hooves, and Chelsey adorned in pigtails and with a Teddy bear in her pocket, they were



Justine selects the jousting winner

able to pull off advanced maneuvers including lead changes at every stride.

And that ended the show except for the Grand Finale, where all the evening's participants were invited back into the ring to parade one more time, often interacting with the crown, bringing the 2013 Dressage in the Wine Country to a spectacular close.

Congratulations to the hardworking committee heads for making the 2013 Dressage in the Wine Country another rousing success! Check out their website at <http://www.dressageinthewinecountry.org>.

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten, and now enjoys trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. Joan supports her horse hobby by providing bookkeeping services (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at cowdex.blogspot.com. To reach Joan, email her at joanras795@gmail.com.



The Painted Ladies Rodeo Performers



2014 Hall of Fame Horse



Romax Foldager



Photo: Marcie Lewis



Romax Foldager has been inducted into the Equus Hall of Fame for his lifetime achievement in Dressage and his ability to carry a young rider to national success.

"It is a rare horse," asserted one nominator, "who will allow a seventeen year old rider to raise him three levels in Dressage, and carry her to the heights of the field when she is at such a young age." And Romax Folder is not finished. He is waiting quietly at his home in Fairwind Farms to begin the next Dressage show season, and continue his climb with young rider, Riana Porter.

Romax, aka "Ro" is an eighteen year Danish Warmblood gelding imported by trainer Sue Curry in 2006. Ro had competed successfully in Denmark and the US at second level Dressage, before sustaining a suspensory ligament injury which required a layup at Curry's Fairwind Farms. A working student with Curry, then fifteen year old Riana Porter began to ride Ro in rehab. The horse and rider clicked. "We just connected," says Porter, "I knew he was the horse for me." In 2007, the seventeen-two-hand, dark bay gelding became hers.

After his injury, Romax blazed back into the Dressage show circuit. Under supervision from Curry, he carried Riana to victory in local, regional, and national competitions. Locally they have been named Year End High Point recipients on many occasions, and Junior and Fourth Level Champions for the Sonoma Chapter of the California Dressage Society. They have earned bronze and silver medals from the United States Dressage Federation, and are working on their gold. In 2009, Riana and Ro were named FEI Junior Champions at the USEF Dressage National Festival of Champions in Gladstone New Jersey—when Riana was just seventeen. They

were invited back to Gladstone, competing in 2011, and finishing in the top ten. Riana and Romax received an invitation to compete at the national event in 2012, but Ro had a fever within a week of competition, making him ineligible. Romax has been featured in *Dressage Daily*, *Stable Express*, *Riding Magazine*, *Warmbloods Today*, and *Chronicle of the Horse*. This fall the pair are resting together, but plan to begin conditioning in winter to show at the Grand Prix level in the 2014 season.

Riana's favorite moment with Ro occurred during his win at the 2009 USEF Nationals, where they competed in the FEI Junior division, which is the equivalent of Third Level. "The sky just opened up and dumped on us, right in the middle of our test," recalls Porter. "Ro did not even miss a step. He just continued the test, and seemed even more determined despite the down pour." When asked what Ro does best in the show ring, Riana reports that he has a nice overstep in his extended walk, and always receives the highest scores for this. He has a big passage, and now does one-tempis (flying changes every step). Observers call his changes expressive and uphill.

Around Fairwind, Ro is called "Uncle Romax," because of his attention to the babies. When they are distressed he leans over his paddock fence and his presence calms them. When he and Riana ride by, the youngsters gallop to the fence to say hello. Riana is busy, now twenty-one and working as assistant trainer while continuing her equine science studies at the SRJC, but she looks forward to an exciting and successful season in 2014, with her champion Romax Foldager.



2014 Equus Hall of Fame Winners



Ashley & Howard Herman



Father-daughter team Ashley and Howard Herman have received an Equus Award for their development of the equestrian industry in Sonoma County.

Ashley began riding at age four, along with her sister Meredith and mother Marcia. The Hermans spent the next fourteen years avidly competing throughout the country. Howard's riding career was short-lived; he participated once in a lead line competition and was awarded third place. Miffed, he realized his passion for the sport was as a cheerleader, and not as a rider.

In 1997, Howard purchased Riverside Equestrian Center in Petaluma. Over the last sixteen years, he has continually expanded and developed the property, which has 250 boarders and is now the largest boarding facility in Northern California, and the second largest in the western United States. In 2009, Ashley teamed up with Howard to build Sonoma Horse Park (SHP), a world-class show facility that has become the benchmark for Show Jumping competitions, attracting national and international exhibitors, including several Olympians. With 700 horses per show, and 25,000 visitors annually, Sonoma Horse Park has become the second largest revenue producer in southern Sonoma County. The Hermans have attracted top tier sponsors to their events, including Fortune 500 companies Gucci, Wells Fargo Private Bank, Barclays, and Tesla. In 2012, the US Hunter Jumper Association awarded two of SHP's shows with Member Choice Awards: the HMI Equestrian Challenge and the Giant Steps Charity Classic, designating these events as two out of the five best horse shows in all of California.

The Hermans give back to the community. The Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center is located at on the property, and the Giant Steps Charity Classic is hosted annually at SHP. One hundred percent of the event's profits are donated to Giant Steps, generating over 50% of their annual operating budget. Giant Steps serves

children and adults with a wide range of disabilities from seven bay area counties.

Howard and wife Marcia, and their daughters, Ashley and Meredith, all reside in San Francisco. In her free time, Ashley enjoys travel and jumping show development. Howard enjoys golf.



Howard and Ashley with Meredith (rider) at SHP

John William Kaufman, DMV

Special thanks to MJ Wickham and Tracy Underwood



John Kaufman, DVM has received an Equus Award for his contribution to Sonoma County in the large animal veterinary field.

As far back as he can remember John always wanted to be a veterinarian. According to his father, at age twelve John announced during a family vacation that he wanted "to make sick animals well."

John graduated from Davis Veterinary School in 1977 and then completed an internship at the University of Missouri in Equine Medicine and Surgery. John's passion for knowledge has kept him on the cutting edge of veterinary sciences. Most recently, in 2005 he was awarded a Fellowship in Equine Ultrasound and Diagnostic Imaging from UC Davis and in 2009 he became certified in Veterinary Acupuncture from Colorado State University's School of Veterinary Medicine. John's Redwood Equine Practice was the first private practice in Sonoma County to utilize digital radiography, digital ultrasound, and shockwave therapy.

John is generous with his knowledge and his time. He serves on several committees at UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, the Steering Committee of NORCAL Association of Equine Practitioners, and the Equine Advisory Committee at Santa Rosa Junior College. He also donates his veterinary services to many local non-profit organizations, and lectures at local exhibitions and events about veterinary advances.

John has won many buckles for Team Roping and is a member of the Russian River Riders and the Sonoma County Trailblazers. He spends more of his free time "wrangling" his children these days than he does cows. But he still finds time to swing a leg over his favorite horse Blue. John lives in Fulton with his wife Elizabeth, nine year old twin daughters Jacalyn and Juliet, and six year old son Jake. His children enjoy learning to ride on ponies Howie, Max, and Sal.





2014 Equus Hall of Fame Winners



Mary Kathleen “Kate” Sullivan



Kate Sullivan has received an Equus Award for her dedication to humane treatment and safe rehoming of our local temporarily displaced horses.

As a child, Kate never owned a horse, but went for weekly rides at local stables. She remembers connecting with a horse named Brandy, “part Quarter Horse and part Alaskan mutt,” who taught her to ride.

Kate was born an army brat at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Tx. After growing up on farms in Maine and Alaska, she moved to San Francisco in 1991 and worked for fifteen years in high tech business development. During a “midlife transition” in 2002 Kate moved to Sonoma County and got her first horse – an OTTB named Rhiannon. As the recession hit, Kate witnessed the plight of horses and horse owners, and founded Sonoma Action For Equine Rescue (SAFER). SAFER’s mission is to recycle healthy and usable displaced horses back into the horse-keeping community—and economy—and to prevent their being swept up in the illegal slaughter industry. SAFER provides several programs including Donate A Bale at local feed stores, Public Hay Assistance, extensive free media to rehome horses, an options hotline for owners, and foster facilities. It is Kate’s goal to make fostering a rescue horse easy for anyone, with SAFER quickly finding the horse a home. Since founding SAFER, Kate has rehomed almost 200 horses from several sources and kept many more in their homes. When Kate finds an unrehomeable horse, she is courageous enough to offer it a humane end without fear or hardship. Kate works with animal control in Lake and Mendocino counties, and with a citizen’s group in Sonoma County to review and revise local large animal ordinances and to seek more affordable ways of providing humane euthanasia.

Kate lives in Sebastopol with her two cats. She enjoys growing her own food and tending to her organic garden in her free time.



Auction rescue Sunny won big at the 2013 Cowboy Dressage World Finals

Patricia Michele Williams

Special thanks to Ed Weber



Patti Williams receives an Equus Award as Volunteer of the Year. She is being honored for her decades of service and leadership in Sonoma County’s oldest horse association: The Sonoma County Driving & Riding Club (SCDRC).

Patti was born and raised in San Francisco. She didn’t own horses as a child, but remembers her mother bringing her to Sea Horse Ranch in Half Moon Bay to learn to ride. She got her first horse, Poncho, when she was thirty-five. Patti moved to Sonoma County in 1979 for professional reasons and started her family. In 1992, looking for fellowship and service opportunities, Patti joined the SCDRC.

The SCDRC was founded in 1937. The clubhouse, used by many equestrian organizations to this day, was constructed in 1942. Patti has served in a leadership role in this historic club for more than two decades. Three years after joining, she was elected as secretary. In this vital role, she maintained attendance, membership data, insurance policies, and published the newsletter (the old-fashioned way—by hand) for twelve years. Patti is a key player in ensuring access to the clubhouse for other Sonoma County horse organizations. Many of these duties she continues to perform even though she is not currently secretary. Patti was recently re-elected to the board, which is another two-year term.

Patti dedicates her time to other volunteer activities including our state and regional park mounted assistance units. She and her Tennessee Walker Sunny have now accrued over 1,000 hours of service patrolling our local parks.

Patti lives in Rohnert Park with her cat, Tigerlily. She has two children, John and Sarina, and two grandchildren, Asaisha and Alora. In her free time she enjoys introducing her granddaughters to horses, utilizing events at the Rincon Riders arena, which is owned by SCDRC, and designed to facilitate interest and skills in young riders.



Patti and Sunny on MAU patrol



10th Annual
Sonoma County Horse Council
Equus Awards Banquet

*Join us for elegant food and great company
in celebration of the equestrian way of life in Sonoma County!*

Saturday, March 22, 2014

DoubleTree Inn, Rohnert Park

5:45pm Registration & Silent Auction

7:00pm Dinner & Awards

Congratulations to 2014 Equus Awards Recipients!

Sponsorship of the Equus Awards Banquet

Sponsorship of the 10th Annual Equus Awards Banquet is the single most effective way to meet the horse people of Sonoma County, face-to-face. This event crosses all bounds; whether English, Western, Hunter-Jumper or Trail, all equestrians come together once a year for this great event.

As a sponsor you will be showcased to this dynamic audience, recognized in the Sonoma County Horse Journal (with over 3000 readers), the Equus Awards program and on our website all year long. Additionally, sponsors also enjoy a one-year SCHC membership and tickets to the gala event. Sponsorship levels range from \$250 to \$3,000. Inviting your clients and colleagues to join you for the evening is a great way to say, "thanks" and helps make this the premier event for the horse world of Sonoma County.

If sponsorship is not an option for you, please consider a donation to our Silent Auction. Again, you'll be recognized and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping protect the welfare of local horses and riders.

For additional information about Sponsorship:

Contact **Patrice Doyle**, SCHC Sponsorship Chair, at (707) 695-9295 or Patrice@cochranerickson.com

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To attend the Equus Awards Banquet, please see the Reservation Form in this issue
or visit the SCHC website: www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Information: Karen Indindoli 707 484-5813 or kindindoli@gmail.com

To Purchase Tickets Online: <http://equus-awards.eventbrite.com>



Sonoma County Events

Giant Steps Charity Classic



Show Jumping arena at Sonoma Horse Park

The Giant Steps Charity Classic presented by Gucci, was held July 31 to August 4, and brought together equestrians from across the western United States, Mexico, and Canada in support of Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center. In its fourth year, the Charity Classic was the largest ever, with over 600 competitors, more than 500 guests at the Saturday night gala dinner, and raising nearly \$250,000.

Gucci was a new sponsor to the show. While the company has long been a sponsor of horse shows in Europe, this is their first time to join a US show. The owner of Sonoma Horse Park, Ashley Herman said, "We are honored to partner with Gucci on Giant Steps Charity Classic. Gucci is the foremost luxury brand in the world and their strong equestrian heritage makes them a natural partner. We look forward to making Giant Steps Charity Classic a highlight on the American Show Jumping calendar." Gucci joins long-time Charity Classic sponsors Eden Valley Stables, Barclays, Wild Turkey Farm, Goode Rider, Sonoma Mountain Village, Horse & Style Magazine, Alder Lane Farm, Chestnut Hill, Redwood Equine, Summit State Bank, as well as new sponsors Shaklee, Morning Star Sporthorses, Equuleus Designs, Julie Atwood Events, Joey Pedroni Stables, Ice Horse, and Meridian Aero.

The show was held at the marvelous Sonoma Horse Park, and included signature events such as the Wild Turkey Farm Battle of the Sexes, and the Rev Moto Ride and Drive. The \$10,000 Barclays Six Bar was held during the Saturday evening gala dinner, and was as exciting as ever. After three rounds and at a fence height of 1.72m, a three-way tie was called among Bjorn Ikast, Karrie Rufer, and Ned Glynn. On Sunday, Helen McNaught and Laricello jumped to first place in the \$30,000 Shaklee Grand Prix, beating her husband and business partner, Duncan MacFarlane on Mr Whoopy, as well as twenty-four other competitors.

The Saturday gala featured top-notch catering by Park Avenue Catering, elegant wines by Rombauer Vineyards, and a lovely décor of simple boxwoods in silver champagne buckets and moss runners created by Roberta Peters Design. The live auction included a family retreat in Mendocino, business class tickets to Paris along with tickets to the Gucci Masters, a trip to Cambodia, and much more.

A highlight of the evening was, of course, the demonstration by Giant Steps riders. Ranging in age from four to fifty-six, and representing physical, cognitive and behavioral disabilities, the riders

Written by Giant Steps Staff

poignantly demonstrated the extraordinary versatility and impact of therapeutic riding.

Physical gains include increased core strength, better balance, improved gross and fine motor skills. One of the featured riders relies on a wheelchair, so the stretch, movement and freedom he feels on a horse is unparalleled. The horse's movement also has the amazing ability to strengthen weaker muscles and loosen tight muscles. Further, each time the horse stops and starts the rider must work to support himself and stay upright, strengthening the muscles in his trunk, and improving his core strength.

Riders with autism, developmental delays, and attention deficit disorder benefit because the passive movement they receive from the horse stimulates their neural system and promotes learning and language, as well as cognitive gains. Similarly, riders with autism who might be challenged in a busy classroom due to sensory overload, can focus and learn the same lesson while sitting on the back of a horse due to the calming effect of the rhythmic movement of the horse.

Emotionally, all riders form important relationships with their horses. They trust their horses to carry them safely. In turn, their horses trust the riders to treat them with kindness and respect. For some Giant Steps' riders, including the veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder, relationships based on mutual trust are difficult to foster. Our riders are able to learn a lot about themselves from their 1,000 pound



A happy rider

friends who always speak the truth. Horses teach the values of kindness, confidence, and consistency. One of Giant Steps' veteran riders said that there are only two places where he feels calm: at the beach and spending time with his horse at Giant Steps.

For all Giant Steps riders there are recreational benefits. Giant Steps offers a place for riders to exercise, socialize, and have fun. Interacting with the natural world and animals leads to a state of well-being that goes beyond being free of illness. Many of our riders' parents report that Giant Steps is the only therapy that their child looks forward to each week. This was echoed by a mother of one of the riders in the demonstration.

She has been in the program since November of last year, and she has changed so much. I really don't know how she feels because she doesn't talk, but I really think that she's really much happier. She's walking with her head up, she always has a big smile on her face, and I know she's waiting for every Friday. [The day she has her riding lesson.] She's so excited to be here.

To see Giant Steps in action, call 707-769-8900. Classes operate Tuesday through Saturday, and visitors are always welcome—as are volunteers!

Horse Husbandry—The Occasionally True Tales of a Local Horse Husband Attitude Adjustment, Please

Column editor Mark Krug

Having a horse is a heart-breaking experience. Most of us have been there at least once. Maybe you own a horse for, say, seven years and it was lame for six of those years. Or, your horse has a rare disease that occurs only once in 75,000 individuals that requires you to massage the base of its tongue for forty-five minutes, twice daily, or else the horse's face falls off. Or, you spent your life savings on a performance horse that decides, one day, that trailering is simply not an acceptable means of transportation, it is best to simply stay home. Or, you learn the hard way that your fast, bold new roping horse is terrified of piebald-faced cattle.

I remember a decade ago, when I had my first horse at the tender age of forty-two, a hysterically funny co-worker, and long-time horse-woman, Sue Stoneman said to me, in response to my whining about how much time and money horses demanded, "That's what time and money are for." While just a spontaneous quip, it struck me as rather profound. I felt like, duh, of course we make time—and whatever financial resources we have—available for our interests, hobbies, and passions. Since then, I have strived to be less whiney and to adjust my attitude about the day-to-day misadventures in having a horse. Based on this new worldview, I once again find myself offering unsolicited advice to you in this column. And here it is, in the form of common scenarios we all share.

Scenario one: Running into your vet and her daughter at the grocery store.

Old way of thinking: Crap, there she is, the person I've written \$17,000 in checks to over the last three years, probably looking for caviar and French champagne—on my dime!

Adjusted way of thinking: Well look at that, my vet and her twenty year old daughter. I feel so honored to have funded so much of the daughter's college education because education is so important to a functioning society.

Scenario two: You've just left the fifth voicemail message in as many days for your farrier to get him out to nail on another lost shoe.

Old response: Damn, what's so hard about returning a freakin' phone call, especially in this day and age when everybody has a cell phone!

Adjusted response: Golly, my farrier is so busy and dedicated that he isn't in position to be distracted with my incessant calling. Maybe an opportunity presents itself here to locate a new farrier.

Scenario three: The breeder from whom I just bought this two year old says the colt doesn't lead well because he has so much pride stemming from his dominant stallion's side.

Impulse response: What a crock of \$%#&!!

Adjusted response: What a crock of \$%#&!!

Scenario four: The body worker who assessed my filly tells me she has abandonment issues from a previous life and thus, should have constant companionship. Oh, and ninety-minute massages three times a week.

Wrong response to body worker: Seriously?!

Much better response to body worker: Thanks for that information, your suggestions would be nice for the horse, I'll see what I can do for her along those lines.

Scenario five: My trail horse is terrified of baby strollers.

Wrong response to horse: Grow up, that's just ridiculous!

Right response: I find it fascinating how your survival instinct as a prey animal manifests itself in our modern world, how your flight instinct kicks in when you experience new or alien objects, all in order to live another day. Good for you, maybe we can just desensitize you a bit here.



Mark and Tucker

Scenario six: I spent three hours yesterday getting one ounce of wormer in my mare ... with two on the ground! In the process, she stomped on my foot twice, bit me once!

Wrong response: She's a bull-headed, stubborn, ill-tempered mare who makes it hard on herself and drives me to the edge!

Right response: These worming episodes are opportunities to examine our communication issues, our mutual interest in leadership and trust and, perhaps, the need for more ground work.

Scenario seven: My gelding broke a fence section in order to chew the tail off the neighboring mare, a competitive Dressage horse, for the third time in four years.

Wrong response to Dressage Queen: Well dang, that gelding sure does like your mare, too bad she allows him to chew her tail off!

Adjusted response: The condition of the mare's tail may seem important now, but we will surely laugh about this one day, ha, ha, ha...those silly horses!

So you see, the experience of horses-as-heart-breakers is merely a choice we make. We can elect to frame our relationships however we wish. We can choose to see all of the undesired experiences as simply the nature of these creatures and of the life style we've elected. After all, in the end, it is usually just time and money we're whining about.

Mark lives near Graton with his wife Cheryl, a retired Dressage Queen, and their critters, all consumers of time and money.



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*The Equestrian Athlete*

Column editor Lily Baker-Lubin

Train Like You Show and Show Like You Train

Once the exclusive tool of professional athletes, sport psychology counseling has now spread across the amateur ranks, including the equestrian disciplines. And no wonder. Sport psychology (SP) hones in on the mental variables that influence success. So, whether you are preparing for a show or simply want to improve your training at home, you can apply the principles of SP to optimize your performance. In time and with practice, you'll find that you will be able to show like you train and train like you show.

Reaction or conscious choice?

Experience has shown that we produce our best performances when we are present, focused, and self-aware, because in this mental state we have the power of conscious choice. There are two fundamental principles that reduce automatic, unwanted responses and empower our ability to choose. First, you must be in control of yourself before you can expect to control your performance and ride at an optimal level. As simple as this sounds, it is one of the most frequently ignored concepts I have observed among riders. Second, you can't always control things around you (environment, people, etc.), but you can choose how you react and respond to them. This concept epitomizes our ability to become "comfortable with being uncomfortable" and is the most influential dynamic that will help narrow the gap between training and showing.

Simulating key stressors

A common phenomenon among athletes is that they often perform at a much higher caliber in practice than in competition. Given that they frequently compete in an unfamiliar setting, it's not surprising that the newness of their surroundings accounts in part for this. Think of how your horse behaves on the show grounds as compared to at home. So one of our primary goals is to simulate key stressors and construct a positive experience out of practice and familiarity. Showing can be exciting and fun and therefore we must view simulation as a framework in which to practice refining our reactions to a variety of types of stress. Some common stressors and possible candidates for simulation training are detailed below. This work is maximally effective when it is tailored towards individual needs.

• The issue: Hurry up and wait

We've all experienced this. Often, in an attempt to be organized and on time, we end up with more time than we need, and have trouble maintaining peak readiness. Similarly, when forced to rush, we often arrive at the arena in a scramble and feel unprepared, overly anxious and enter before we should. Unexpected schedule changes, rather than our time management, are often the culprits.

Try this: Choose one day of training in which you intentionally

*Client Emily and her Warmblood Sol*

arrive early (at least a half hour) and see how this affects you. Next, try arriving with less time than what you're used to (at least fifteen minutes) and note the effects. Once you have identified the effects of both scenarios on your performance, develop a game plan that will help you prepare accordingly. It can be valuable to note which situation, if given a choice, you prefer. As you're planning out when to arrive at the show grounds, consider your preference in case you're faced with unexpected scheduling. Finally, regardless of time constraint take a moment just before you enter the arena to do a quick check—are you ready to perform? Not to just ride...but to perform?

• The issue: Heat wave/cool customer

Warm summer days are lovely for poolside activity but putting on full seat breeches, a jacket, and a helmet can make it hard to stay comfort-

able. Environmental variables are often culprits for influencing performance levels since we feel like we have no say in the matter. While some climate considerations are out of our control, we can occasionally take the initiative and simulate thermoregulatory stress.

Try this: Get to know the types of climates in which you'll be performing. Practice what it's like to ride warm. Put on a layer or two and notice whether this affects you. Similarly if it's cool, you can practice minus one layer and see how your body adapts. Ease yourself into this activity as it can be a shock to the system but can yield valuable preparation plans. Weather advisory: You should proceed with this activity only if you have no pre-existing health concerns. Finally, temperature is not the only variable to consider. Wind can often lead to high horses. On the next windy day, take a moment to notice how this changes your horse, and your approach. Is there a better plan?

• The issue: One and done

A classic source of anxiety comes from riding once, in front of



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a judge. We get one shot to go in and ride. There are no circles, no impromptu transitions, no do-overs to get it right... simply the test. Part of the problem is feeling as if we are riding for the test rather than the test being ridden by us. The second portion of this is the love/hate relationship with the fact that we are being judged. On one side we are offered a chance to be evaluated and given advice on our progress and what to work on next. On the other side we can feel criticized, with too much emphasis put on our limitations and what we do incorrectly. A few poorly chosen comments or a poor score can ruin the day.

Try this: To simulate one eight minute test, why not practice a one and done ride? Allow yourself a warm-up and then go ride the test as you would in the show. After you are done, cool down and call it a day. Practice being comfortable with walking away. You can debrief and note what you two need to work on, what might help next time in the warm-up, what to ask your coach, etc but you do not get to stay in the arena and ride portions of the test again. Work on honestly viewing what you did well, and what needs improvement. Make sure you note an equal number of items in each category, and without self criticism, and make a concrete plan for the next training session. At the show continue this pattern of independent evaluation, give yourself a moment to review your ride, yourself and with your team first. Think about what you liked, and what you know you need to work on, and have a brief dialogue with your coach. When you feel as though you have debriefed adequately, then pick up the test and your scores. They'll have less power, and you'll have more perspective.



Emily and Sol perform with grace

• ***The issue: All eyes on you***

Our sport is largely influenced by etiquette in which a certain conduct is endorsed. For example, spiking your test and doing a touch down dance after you score an 80% might raise a few eyebrows. It also means that when we invite non-horsey friends and family they can distract us from our normal routines. We can become focused on issues like whether they can fit in without spooking anyone and whether they are enjoying themselves. The love and support is central to why we are able to participate, but how can we have that and not be worried about little Timmy starting a stampede?

Try this: On a light riding day or a hack day invite a friend out

to watch. Notice how this might change your routine. Make sure to have them sit ringside and identify whether spectator distractions might be produced. We often lose significant focus when we are concerned about who is watching. It will also give you the chance to refine how you can address this issue and how you might prepare your spectators so they can best support you.

• ***The Issue: And the crowd goes wild***

Crowds and ambient noise can easily trigger a lack of focus or more specifically divert focus towards irrelevant cues. When watching truly focused athletes perform, you can tell they are "in the zone" with optimal concentration, responding and adjusting only when appropriate and with ease.

Try this: First consider how you ride best. Is it with laser focus where bombs can detonate and you ride on unaware of debris? Is it a soft focus that allows you to monitor multiple things within your surroundings? Is it an open focus in which you can carry on a conversation with someone while riding? Each rider has a focus preference. Note that this does not necessarily indicate the "funnest" kind of ride, but the kind of focus that allows you to ride at your best. For example, perhaps you really enjoy your rides during which you chat with a friend however you lack productivity and your horse's responsiveness suffers as a consequence. Once you have identified your optimal focus level then create a variation. For example, have a barn mate who is aware of your simulation come and chat or move things around....stand up, sit down, open a plastic bag, etc. If you prefer activity, ride in quiet isolation during off hours. Does your focus change? If so, how do you regain your focus? Athletes will often create a cue word, locate a focal point reminder (a letter often works--perhaps "F") or perform a small act (re-clip the helmet strap or adjust a glove) that will assist in entering your zone.

Concluding remarks

Sport psychology is a diverse field that can help optimize performance. Simulation is one part of SP that can be utilized to master variables and increase your chances of success. It should be noted however that simulation is a supplemental tool and should only be incorporated into your training program as a trouble-shooting modality. Our primary goal is to create a comprehensive program, both mental and physical, that enhances our performance, addressing issues that arise along the way and employing creative strategies that support success.

Lily Baker-Lubin is an avid equestrian, and the founder and director of Top Training, a comprehensive performance enhancement program. Top Training offers athletes Pilates and Sport Psychology services. Baker-Lubin has a MS in Kinesiology and has completed Body Arts and Science International's comprehensive teacher training, Core Align 1 & 2, Ride Right's coaching certification as well as other extensive exercise science education. She has been a competitive athlete her whole life and has been an equestrian for over twenty-four years. You can contact Lily at rideright3@gmail.com.



Sonoma County Services

LandSmart for Livestock

Written by Sonoma Resource Conservation District Staff

Horses are a valued part of California's suburban and rural environment. Horse owners' responsible management of land and water resources keeps horses healthy, land productive and valuable, and relationships with neighbors friendly, while protecting the environment.

One way that horse owners can plan for and demonstrate stewardship of natural resources is by developing ranch plans that address non-point source pollution and other land management concerns commonly associated with horses. Areas addressed can include:

- Manure
- Pasture land
- Stormwater drainage and confinement areas
- Roads and waterways

Manure storage and management

Horse wastes (manure, urine, and soiled bedding) can be a great resource if harnessed through composting or some other use, but can also present a management challenge for horse owners. If horse wastes make their way into streams, they can be detrimental to fish, insects, other aquatic life, and overall stream health. Effective horse manure management ensures clean and safe facilities, protects creeks and ground water, and reduces odor and insect breeding opportunities.

Pasture management

Soil erosion in pastures usually occurs when vegetative cover is removed and soil is left unprotected during the winter months. Over stocking a pasture and allowing livestock to graze forage down to bare ground presents a threat to the health of pastures and adjacent waterways. Protecting a pasture's soil and vegetative cover through careful site planning and grazing management will help to maintain pasture productivity.

Stormwater drainage and confinement areas

Rainwater flowing across the land is called stormwater runoff. If stormwater runoff is allowed to erode soil from bare areas or run through manured areas, it can become polluted. High use areas, such as buildings, corrals, arenas, paddocks, turnout areas, manure storage areas, etc, are areas that should be managed to keep clean water from becoming polluted. Diverting fresh water around high-use areas will keep the "clean water clean" and minimize the runoff from high-use areas. By keeping the size of high-use areas small, managing polluted water can be reduced.

Roads and waterways

Waterways, channels, streams, and riparian areas are sensitive to



Horse owners learn about beneficial management practices for paddocks

damage from adjacent and upslope land use activities and practices. Healthy riparian zones protect land from erosion and flooding.

They also buffer waterways from the effects of potential nutrient, pesticide, pathogen, and sediment runoff. Roads that drain toward waterways can be major contributors of sediment pollution to those waterways. Careful management of waterways and roads on equine facilities can keep these resources healthy and functional.

Ranch plans are management documents that identify and help address all of these concern by

providing recommendations for conservation practices that protect natural resources while supporting the landowner's management goals. The Sonoma Resource Conservation District (SRCD), a local, non-regulatory special district, currently has grant funding available through its LandSmart™ for Livestock program to assist interested equine facilities in the development of these plans.

The LandSmart™ for Livestock program funding includes an initial site visit by SRCD staff, a subsequent site visit with a technical equine consultant, if needed, a comprehensive ranch plan document and a facility site map. **Planning assistance is free to any size equine facility located within the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed.** No property or number of horses is too small or too big to receive assistance!

For more information on the program and to sign up please contact Kari Wester at 707-569-1448 ext. 101 or at kwester@sonomarc.org.

Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) are the state's only grassroots conservation delivery systems which identify local conservation problems and guide solutions on a voluntary basis. California houses ninety-eight districts. The Sonoma RCD covers almost a million acres and includes the Russian River, Petaluma River, Sonoma Creek, Stemple Creek, and Gualala River watersheds. For more information visit www.sonomarc.org.

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Sonoma County Authors

Written by Horse Journal Staff

The Breath of the Horse: Reflections on Nature, Presence and Partnership

"When horse and human come together in the present moment, a third entity, the essence of Spirit silently flows between us. The horse is a messenger of Divine wisdom. Of presence and possibility, of dark and light. His body belongs to the wild landscape, our common ancestor. His instincts are fine-tuned as he lives in harmony with the energy of the earth, other animals, and humans. His expressions are honest and pure. He reflects back to us the energy we project in his presence without judgment. Here, we find our soul's truth, not always a comfortable place to dwell, however rich and transformative our pilgrimage may be. What is authentic in us must step forward, for there is no symbiotic relationship between us without it. In the rhythm of his sacred breath, we are home."

Charlotte Angin, Introduction

In 2013, Sonoma County Horse Council member and bay area native Charlotte Angin published her first book, *The Breath of a Horse: Reflections on Nature, Presence and Partnership*. Charlotte's writing emphasizes human awareness and "presence" with horses, while honoring both partners in mind, body, and spirit. With an extensive background in education, horsemanship, equine-assisted learning and energy work, Charlotte brings a fresh and unique perspective to her international clientele, mentoring in the art of "mindful horsemanship." Recently, Charlotte purchased her dream horse property in Grants Pass, Or. Visit her website/blog at www.thebreathofthehorse.com.

Charlotte, how would you describe what your book is about?

The heart of the book is about the magic that touches our relationships with horses when we are more conscious of the energy, emotions, and projections we bring to the barn each day. The language of the horse can be very subtle. Horses will always reflect back to us our unconscious energy and beliefs. I believe they have far more to teach the human soul about authenticity, presence, and harmony than we have to teach them.

Who should read your book?

The book can speak to both newbies and old pro's. Taking a step back, learning to be more aware of the energy and intent we bring to our relationships with horses is the foundation for everything else we do with them, for better or worse.

Who inspired your philosophy about horses?

My philosophy comes from the heart of who I am. I was always the quiet, introspective, and gentle kid around horses and other animals. That seems to be my nature. The louder we are, the less we tend to "hear." I've had outstanding teachers, though, and each was a gift in their own way, not only in terms of horsemanship but in helping me grow as a person. Each is represented in some way in the work I do.

What is your favorite section?

The "centering" prayers. I am also pretty fond of the Introduction. The book is simply stream of consciousness writing, something all writers strive to tap into.

**Can your readers find any accompanying materials that may complement your book?**

We have a fantastic smart phone app available this winter. It is meant to be an on-the-go version of the book, with fifty inspirational reflections and original horse photography. I also wrote a few articles for the Horse Journal in 2011-2012 that are still available on the website

How did you come to the decision to write your book?

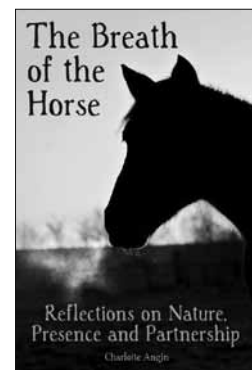
You know, I think it was really a lifetime in the making. As soon as I could form sentences, I was putting together little books with a stapler, scrap paper, and crayons. I wasn't much of a student in grade school, so I used to sit in the back of the classroom and write horse stories (unbeknownst to the Sisters of Mercy!) I still have the stories in a box in the garage. It was not until the last few years that I felt I had anything particularly important to say. I'm not entirely comfortable putting human words in mouths of horses, even having been an empath my entire life. But the horses encouraged me as I witnessed amazing transformations between horse and human when clients eliminated projections, learned "presence" and simply listened to their horse in a new way.

Any plans for a follow-up publication?

As a matter of fact, yes. I am currently at work on my second book that speaks more specifically to the stages of personal transformation. Our soul, nature, animals—each continually sends us symbolic messages of truth and renewal. It is a beautiful, primal and subtle language. The working title of the new book is Homecoming.

The reviews of Charlotte's book are overwhelmingly positive. Traci Beebe, Writer/Producer of the movie "Cowboy," writes, "*The Breath of the Horse: Reflections on Nature, Presence and Partnership* touched something deep and primal in me. As a lifelong horsewoman, reading it was a very nostalgic experience. Charlotte reminded me of why I first fell in love with these incredibly special animals—their ability to see into our very souls and bring out the very best in us."

To find *Breath of a Horse*, for yourself or as a special gift, visit Amazon and Barnes and Noble bookseller sites.





Spitting Sand—A Learner's Journey Gift Horse

Column editor Jessica Boyd

The holidays are here and the frenzy grates on my nerves. The stress around finding that perfect gift pushes me ever closer to the Grinch lurking in my heart. Then I see my horses and their soft noses, fuzzier and fuzzier coats shining in the setting sun each autumn afternoon, four distinctive whinnies echoing across the ranch as I approach them, and it all combines in a peaceful reminder that real gifts in life do not come in boxes. The gift isn't just their warm presence at the end of my day; it is what we learn side by side on our journeys.

They say don't look a gift horse in the mouth, which is actually good advice, but undersells the gift part of the statement. A horse, whether free or purchased for many thousands of dollars, represents a promise. Sometimes it is right on the surface, a horse brimming with potential and eager to be your partner. Other times, you have to unlock that promise, peeling off layers of poor handling and uncertain history to find the diamond inside. As you start this journey with a horse, you open yourself up to joy. Even as you encounter frustrations and setbacks, the opportunity to find something new and peaceful—or even just a wee bit more creative—inside your soul presents itself on a fairly regular basis. Horses are absolutely honest and reflect you back to you. This means you can be the person you really want to be and they will see it and respond to it. The flip side is they will also react to negative input—you cannot lie to a horse. Like small children, they know it and they don't understand it.

I wish I could say I handle every training moment with my energy in a calm and creamy place, but alas I do not. There is a look they give you when they know you're frustrated, "Well, what are you going to try now since that last thing OBVIOUSLY didn't work. Or the thing you tried before." I have learned to stop and take a very slow, deep breath. And think. Not about what's in it for me—they do not care that I have plans and goals for us—but how to motivate them to try something new or work a little harder on this other thing.

And when you find each other and begin to listen to each other, well, magical things can happen.

Calabar and I have been working much more consistently lately and finding our balance with one another. Sometimes I'm not sure we're making any progress and there days he tests my patience with an amazing array of tricks. Most days I am sure he needs a better rider to get him to the next level of his training.

Today I found out I was wrong and the glow I feel inside is better than anything anyone could possibly buy me and put in a box.

Steve, Lena, Calabar, and I went to a clinic taught by a Dressage



Jessica and Calabar

instructor. Ellen Eckstein has watched me with Calabar for nearly two years now and it has not always been pretty. Our last session was spent in the round pen doing ground work because someone was not being a good listener and I was not being a good leader. We did get in a few minutes of riding, but I've shied away from clinics a couple times since then because I just wasn't sure I could get us both in a head space to actually get some riding done. In truth, I was worried about having him misbehave and not having the connection we needed to pull him back to me—especially in a big barn environment with lots of people

and horses moving around to distract him from the lesson.

But it was time for us to pull up our breeches and give things another shot. My agenda was fairly simple. Try not to embarrass myself and make sure we learned something. Who knows? Maybe we'd get fifteen minutes of in-the-saddle time this time. His agenda was to be super excitable about all the energy of the place, then to stand in the middle of the arena not actually doing anything. But together we worked both of those things.

We pushed through the distractions. We had a few "We're about to be in trouble" moments (Ellen's words), but ended up feeling the harmony of balance. We weren't always perfectly so, but the lesson ended with a smooth and delightful trot in both directions. Once we got that, his goal of standing and resting while other horses worked came to fruition. My expectations were exceeded—both with the work we did and the connection between us that gave us that lovely trot—and my face still hurts from smiling so hard.

This gift will never fit in a box. It fills me up from the inside and bursts out like sunshine creeping over the horizon; suddenly illuminating what is truly important in life. It's all about the journey and those on it with you. Thank you, Calabar, for walking this road with me.

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Letter to the Editor

The Cherokee and Choctaw Mustangs

Dear Editor,

In Fall 2011 the Horse Journal published two fascinating articles about Spanish Mustangs. Both writers were passionate about the incredible strengths of the wild Mustang breed, both writers worked with rescue Mustangs. Originally the Andalusian horses arrived in North America via Columbus as well as the Conquistadors, and native peoples took up breeding, raising and working with these amazing animals. But many people do not realize there are purebred Choctaw and Cherokee Mustangs with lineage going back hundreds of years, even beyond the Thoroughbred lineages, being bred and worked here in the United States today, and believe me, their owners are deeply dedicated and passionate about these horses!

Among horse breeds, the Spanish mustangs are unusual in that they contain all color alleles. The Indians did not select against any color and some peoples such as the Cherokee selected for unusual color and patterns. Every solid color is found within the breed including black, grullo, bay, all shades of dun, buckskin, chestnut, palomino and cream. Even "pink" horses—a warm variety of "amber champagne"—exists within the breed. White markings and patterns such as frame, sabino, and tobiano are very common as well as the leopard complex of colors of blankets, leopards, and varnish roans.

The horses stand between thirteen and fifteen hands at the withers and weigh between 700 and 900 pounds, are short-coupled and deep-bodied. Their fronts are narrow and the legs join in an "A" rather than a "U" shape. This feature allows them to shed heat easily, contributing to their performance in endurance events. The



Charming faces

for their gentle dispositions, even temperaments and deep sense of human affiliation. They attach themselves to people they trust and become devoted to them.

Recently the Choctaw horses were discovered by the combined driving world, and they have begun competing under the care of Josh Rector and his team. After several months of intense training and preparation they went to a competition in North Carolina called Pine Tree Combined Driving Event, competing with exceptional results for the first show. They finished in second place by just two hundredths of a point, and clearly winning both the cones and the marathon endurance phases. This further exemplifies their natural disposition for endurance, cooling themselves, and tenacity to work hard when needed. Josh Rector commented, "These Choctaw ponies continue to impress me with their endurance, speed, and ability to listen and react well, even with significant distractions, they don't show their youth, they just show their potential." You can see more about Josh and the pair of buckskin Choctaws he drove by visiting his page www.teamnagsheadfarm.com/services.html.

I decided to look into this breed because a good friend of mine, Antonia Adezio, is new to Sonoma County and has the great opportunity to receive a young Choctaw horse that happens to be named "Sonoma." Antonia asked me to let the horse community know about the breed, and also invite people to email her if they have a setting where *Sonoma* could be a companion horse on a ranch with ample pasture.

If you would like to learn more about these rare purebred Mustangs go to www.summerduckwood.net. To reach Antonia Adezio email aadezio@gmail.com. I am fascinated by the story of these strong, warm, intelligent horses and hope to meet *Sonoma* as soon as she finds a home here in Northern California!

Sincerely,
Elisa Stancil Levine



Sonoma and mom, Ictinick's Coco

croup is sloping and the tail is set low. The horses have an unusually long stride and tend to have smooth gaits. Some are gaited.

The horses have heads with broad foreheads and narrow faces and profiles may be either straight or convex. Their manes and tails are thick and long and some of them are curly. Their feet are unusually tough and many work unshod. The horses are renowned



Readers Write

Fodder for Thought

Written by Tracy Underwood



Horses enjoy the fodder

Fodder used to be just another name for livestock feed, but it is now used to describe a specific raw, hydroponically grown food source for horses and livestock. Grown from just two pounds of barley seed, the "biscuits" weighing eighteen pounds are harvested after six days. During the six day growth period, the seeds germinate on 12" x 30" trays under automatic sprinklers. The biscuits look like three inches of sprouted grass on top of a root mass with a depth of about an inch and a half.

I was first introduced to fodder by Amanda Harrington when she and her daughter Sarah came to Santa Rosa Equestrian Center (SREC) to attend the California Dressage Society (CDS) Junior Clinic in July 2012. Amanda and her husband Andrew had built their own fodder system and were successfully feeding fodder at Arkenfield Farms, their breeding and training center in Merced. Andrew is originally from Australia where they have been feeding fodder for the past twenty years. The systems were designed to create a food source in arid regions where hay could not be grown.

We typically have between ninety and one hundred horses at SREC. After researching the options, we decided to purchase two of the largest units from Fodder Solutions (www.simplycountry.com). The units are self contained, climate controlled trailers with automatic water sprinklers and lights. For us, the optimal growing temperature is around sixty-eight degrees. We have been feeding fodder at SREC since February 2013.

We were initially drawn to fodder because of its economic potential. With hay at over \$20 a bale, growing our own feed sounded very appealing! The savings will increase over time as we pay off the loan on the Fodder Solutions equipment. The cost of barley seed is currently about thirty-five cents a pound and it takes two pounds of seed to make a biscuit, which is roughly the equivalent of a flake of hay, but the biscuit offers advantages beyond the economics.

The health benefits of the fodder are amazing! We had Clair Thunes, a PhD in nutrition from UC Davis, do an in-depth analysis of our fodder. The results of the analysis can be seen on our website www.srequestrian.com. Basically, the fodder provides an energy dense, live feed source that has a consistent nutritional content in addition to greater amounts of lysine, vitamin E, and



Wes and Eduardo loading up the biscuits to feed

omega-3 fatty acids than hay. Another benefit is the high moisture content which helps reduce the risk of colic by keeping the hindgut hydrated.

Fodder made with 100% barley seed is not a complete feed for horses. Some hay must be fed to meet the phosphorus, calcium, and other mineral requirements. Most horses at SREC are fed fodder for breakfast and lunch and get hay at dinner. We have found that most horses eat the fodder quickly so feeding the hay at dinner helps keep them occupied in the evening.

Many benefits that we have observed but don't necessarily appear in the written analysis include shinier coats and an improvement in attitude and energy, especially in the older ponies at our European Pony School. Our barn vet, John Kaufman, DVM, attributes this to the seniors (some lacking teeth) being able to eat, digest and therefore, get the nutritional benefit of the food by eating the entire raw, live plant and root mass. With fodder, concerns about equine feed possibly containing pesticides, blister beetles, dead rodents and random debris are eliminated.

Fodder helps reduce the carbon footprint of your horse. Several gallons of diesel are used to generate each bale of hay, from the pesticides sprayed on the fields, to baling, to the semi-truck that delivers the hay. Ultimately, SREC will install solar panels to run the fodder system taking it "off the grid" completely!

With the cost of hay ever increasing and as we continue to learn more about how to best manage our stabled horses, I envision more and more barns embracing fodder. Anyone with questions is welcome to contact me or to come visit SREC to see the fodder system in action.

Tracy Underwood is a real estate attorney by profession. Tracy moved to Santa Rosa from Manhattan Beach, California in 2004 when she and Wesley Leckner purchased SREC. Tracy enjoys overseeing the day to day operations of SREC and EPS. She is very active in the local horse community, hosting several Dressage and jumper schooling shows. She is a Northern Regional Director of the California Dressage Society as well as co-chair of the Sonoma chapter of CDS. Tracy can be reached at tracy@srequestrian.com.

Readers Write

Is it Your Fault? Probably!

Let's just start with an example.

I was at a show preparing my clients in the warm up ring. I began to watch other riders and a young woman caught my eye. I noticed how stiff her back was, and then I noticed her outside hand. Every three seconds she would jerk on her horse's mouth. I watched this go on and on, and it was literally every three seconds!

Horses are one of the most pure and honest animals on the Earth. This saint of a horse was trying to figure out what this jerking motion meant. He started to curl his neck and fall behind the bit. Frustrated by his response she yanked his head straight up and kicked with both legs. Listening to his rider, he brought his head up.... But three seconds later she went back to the yanking. Was the falling behind the bit the rider's fault or the horse's? You guessed it, the rider's!

I write about this in hopes to increase the consciousness of a certain horseman mentality. So many riders demand and control, very few stop to seek out why the horse isn't framing up, moving off the leg, or jumping? And if they ask the question, did they ever look at what they might be doing to create the "issue."

There is an "-ism" I teach all my students. If something feels effortful with your equine then "seek to understand." In our example, rather than executing the same "cue" over and over without success, the rider could have said to herself or her trainer, "I am trying to get my horse to do "A," but he keeps doing "B," and I wonder why?" In this approach the rider and/or trainer become detectives while they try different things, search for the source of the problem, and then find the best solution for the rider and their equine athlete.

Unfortunately it's human nature to put blame on something outside ourselves, so naturally many riders don't look at themselves as the problem. Many riders stay in their idea of what the horse should be doing. "His head should be down, he needs to move off my leg." What's tricky is they are right! Our thoughts borrow from the truth that our horse should move off our leg, their head should be in position. But riders often end up achieving their goal in a way that overrides what the horse is trying to tell them. Obviously this is a large issue, and I just touched the surface. There is also another spoke to this wheel which complicates things. Many times the riders or trainers don't know what is wrong, or how to fix it, and they don't reach out to another rider or trainer for suggestions.

Written by Melissa Kalember, Board of Directors



Melissa conducting a clinic: From the Judge's Booth

Can you imagine a horse world where more riders said the following:

- My horse is going too fast, is my lower leg in place or is it gripping?
- My horse is starting to stop at jumps, am I keeping my leg on or is he tired of bailing me out?
- My horse bites me every time I tighten the girth, am I doing it too fast, or is he in pain from the saddle?
- I don't know why your horse is bolting, let's ask another trainer for their thoughts.

Feel the difference. Jerk, three seconds, jerk...
Or "Why?" and success.

Melissa Kalember has been an equestrian for twenty-five years, and obtained her BS from UC Davis in Animal Science, specializing in Equine Science. She is a Hunter/Jumper judge for USEF & SAHJA, a certified equine massage therapist, and a diverse trainer. Melissa owns Kalembers Equine which is based out of the beautiful Wine Country Sporthorse. Melissa combines the knowledge of animal physiology, intuitive training, and a deep love for horses, offering a unique opportunity for all equestrians who believe that horses are our gifts, not our commodities.

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Readers Write

The Karen Chex Story: Part II

Written by Ted Draper

Mrs Bryant started to cry as the vets at UC Davis described the condition of Karen's foot. How could this happen? Karen's lameness and working her while she was on bute, jumped into her memory. The vet recommended that they put Karen down.

Karen's great performance at the Cow Palace and other championships flooded her mind. The heavy price "to win" would take the life of their beloved Karen Chex. Mrs Bryant barely heard the vet on the phone. She was numb with disbelief. It was a nightmare and she wanted to wake up. She mumbled "Is there anything you can do to save her?" The only chance was to amputate the foot. The vet's limited experience with equine amputees was not good, and chances of Karen's survival with a prosthesis were slim. It hardly seemed worth the horse's suffering. The odds against survival were great, but if a horse could survive, it would be Karen. Mrs Bryant knew Karen had heart and courage unlike other horses. She cleared her throat, wiped the tears from her face and with a voice strong and clear said: amputate. She had to give Karen a chance. Mrs Bryant said a prayer, hoping she had made the right decision. Finally she heard back from the vets.

They had amputated below the fetlock joint, and another team of vets had constructed a prosthesis. The vets knew that once Karen came out of the anesthetic she would try to get up, and possibly try to get rid of the prosthesis. They prepared a sling which ran under and around Karen and when the time was right, raised her onto her feet. The amount of tranquilizer was slowly reduced. She steadied herself on her heavily bandaged hind legs and bandaged right front leg. Karen just let the injured leg hang. She stayed in the sling until the next day. Karen began to eat and drink and did not reject the prosthesis. Up to this point Karen moved around by hopping on her right leg, with her powerful hind legs doing most of the work. She would raise the prosthesis slightly off the ground as she moved around the stall.

Boo Woolsey, then an intern, took an interest in Karen. Boo is a small person and very business like in the way she treated all the horses in recovery. At first it was a job and part of her education, but as the week went by, she became drawn to Karen's intelligence and courage. Boo came every morning and night, besides her regular day time job to care for Karen. Boo recognized something special about Karen, and a bond grew between them. One morning, a few days after the amputation, Boo arrived early to check on Karen and found her lying down in the normal position. When Boo entered the recovery stall, Karen nimbly and effortlessly stood up and shook her head as if she was saying "I'm okay." Being able to lie down and rest was going to be Karen's salvation. The other legs were going to get the rest they needed for her survival. Boo knew in her heart Karen was determined and smart enough to accept her condition, and this made Boo all the more dedicated to this three-legged mare.

After a week the vets were impressed with Karen's recovery and her acceptance of the prosthesis. There were several disadvantages to having the fetlock joint as the end of the stump, so they decided to amputate a little above the fetlock joint, which left

the cannon bone as the stump. This proved to be a wise decision. Boo and another student designed and built a new prosthesis that would be lighter and contour to the stump. It was made of fiberglass with a rubber sole, and supported Karen's weight from her knee. The stump was wrapped in a war bandage (heavy thick padding) which fit snugly into prosthesis.

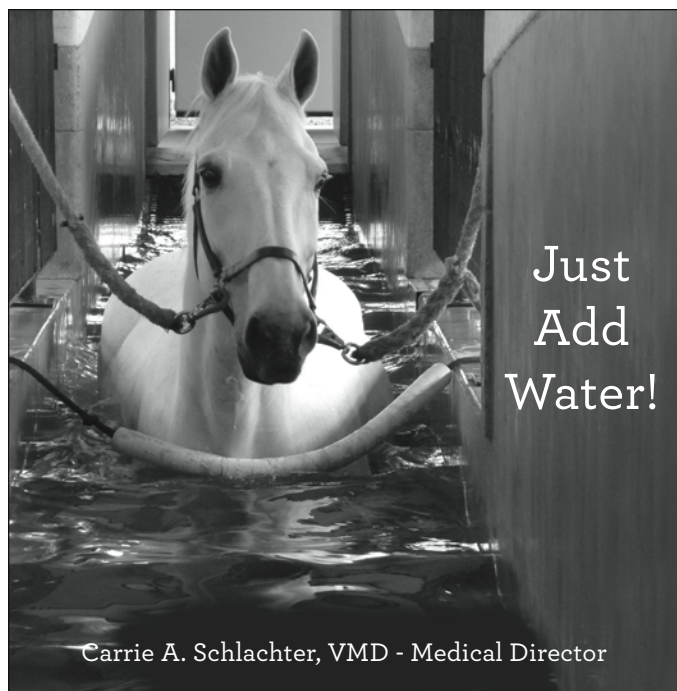
On day three, Karen put a little weight onto her stump. Boo knew she had the right design and concept with this new prosthesis. Karen would have to learn to put some weight onto the left leg, and then be able to walk using both front legs. The question now was how long the other three legs would hold up. That was anyone's guess. The other front leg can not support all the weight of the front end without eventually breaking down. Another big consideration was the health of the stump. Could it stay healthy and continue to support some of Karen's weight? Too much weight on the end of the stump could cause fragmentation of the cannon bone and the skin could never heal causing more problems. Karen's excellent conditioning, solid bone, and correct conformation was to her advantage. Boo had faith, understanding Karen's tenacity or courage. Karen had an uncanny ability to understand her situation, and the intelligence to work with her new leg.

Karen had a steady stream of interested and amazed visitors. When anyone entered her stall, Karen would turn her rear-end, lay her ears back, shake her head and glare. Karen was feeling good again. Her territorial behavior indicated she was mentally ok. Boo kept in touch with Mrs Bryant for updates and to let her know what to expect.

Boo was in control of Karen's care. When Boo wasn't sleeping or in class, she was at Karen's side changing bandages or documenting her progress. The stump needed to be regularly cleaned and scrubbed with betadine. Working with Karen, Boo had to use the sling to support Karen's 1200 lbs. The mare would rest, quietly suspended, while the work was being done. After a while Karen would automatically position herself in the doorway ready for Boo to work on her leg. Karen learned to use the prosthesis to get around and became very mobile. After a month and half in recovery she was moved into a small corral at the hospital where she could graze and get some much needed sun.

When the Bryants came to see Karen Chex, it broke their hearts to see this once proud horse hobbling around. Mrs Bryant knew she had made the wrong decision. The vets conferred with the Bryants about taking Karen back home. Both girls had gone off to college and there was no one to take over the constant care and attention that Karen required. Mrs Bryant asked if Karen could carry a foal. The vets felt this was feasible as long as her other legs supported her. The decision was made to artificially breed Karen to Cal Bars. After three months Karen was in foal.

The expense of keeping Karen at the hospital was costly and Mrs Bryant told Boo to find other accommodations close to the hospital. Boo had become attached to Karen and made



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arrangements to move her into a private stable a short distance from the hospital and home. For Boo, it was get-up, check on Karen, go to school, work at the hospital, check on Karen and then homework. Karen needed constant supervision, and after a month, Boo realized she could not take care of Karen, and go to vet school. Her grades were dropping. Boo wanted to be a vet like her father and schooling was most important. She notified the Bryants that she had to find someone else to care for Karen. All the options were considered.

Boo needed to find a stable, and people who would be responsible for Karen's care...People she knew and trusted. Boo grew up in the Sebastopol and her father was a practicing vet in Sonoma County, so her search began in Santa Rosa for the ideal environment for Karen Chex. We received a phone call from Boo. She wanted to know if we would be interested in taking care of a three-legged, pregnant mare.

It was summer, and the days were long and hot. We were on our way over to Davis to see Karen. We agreed not to make any decisions until we saw the horse, and knew all the details. Boo had warned us about Karen and her nasty disposition. We were taken into a small barn and then watched Boo sling Karen in the doorway. Karen did not like strangers so we kept our distance. My first impression of Karen was she did not want people to see her like this and she was mad at the world. I did not know what to expect with this cranky mare and was very leery about taking on the job of caring for her. Boo took off the prosthesis, and undid the war bandages. The stump had a very pungent smell almost stinging to the nose. Boo indicated that the smell developed after two days in the prosthesis. We slowly moved closer and watched how Boo washed and cleaned the stump. I noticed that Karen's attitude while in the sling was soft and gentle.

Afterwards we talked about what it meant if we took Karen to my stable to board, and the many problems we might have with Karen. Boo made it clear that if we took her, we would have to be totally committed. It would be a 24/7 ordeal. She kept drilling us about the importance of changing the bandages every other day. We thought it over for a few days. Boo needed an answer the next day because a decision about vet school needed to be made. The Bryants trusted Boo to find a suitable facility to care for Karen and were happy with Boo's decision. Karen arrived at the Ted Draper Training Stable to begin the next phase of her life.

The Karen Chex Story will be continued in the spring issue of the Horse Journal.



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Trails and Open Spaces

Column editor Sarah Reid

Trail Safety Accessories for Horse and Rider



Sarah and Oreo

A trail ride can quickly turn into an unplanned adventure. Horse and rider can become separated for a variety of reasons. Riding alone poses challenges and even riding with buddies requires emergency planning. In horse-camping situations, or on trail, horses become loose, sometimes in the dark. Emergency responders can perform much more effectively with information. Your horse needs identification so that he can be returned to you.

Although we do not have true wilderness in Sonoma County, we can find ourselves miles from a road, and some preparation can assist in safety and recovery. Here are some wonderfully easy and helpful accessories for the horse and rider which can bring a happier ending to any trail experience.

For the horse

EquestriSafe (equestri.safe) has a number of safety products for horses. The most basic—and available through an affiliate program supporting CSHA TRAP—is the embroidered neon-colored, Velcro fetlock band (\$19.95-up). This can provide a phone number visible to someone standing near the horse. This band has been proven by a local trail rider to last through an entire summer of trails and horse camping. Reflective leg bands are also available (\$16.95-up), as well as neck bands/collars with information on them (\$16.95-up), and equine first aid kits.

An engraved dog tag can provide simple information such as horse and owner's name, emergency phone numbers, where the horse lives. Engraving machines and a number of decorative tags can be found at local pet stores. Engraving takes about two minutes (SuperPets and Saddles to Boots). Another alternative is a weather-proof luggage tag with the emergency information. Either of these should be attached to a piece of tack which will not readily come off the horse—visible on the breast collar or saddle d-ring are the best; bridles can pull off over the head. One rider I know braids one into her horse's mane, where it has been known to stay for several days. She got one that matches her colorful tack.

For the rider

Road ID is a great solution to quick rider identification and information (roadid.com). A selection of wrist styles provides colors and personalization options. Light and easy to wear, this method is

useful for the solo rider or anytime. Basic model allows for five lines of text. Another model provides additional information, including a website with medical information you have supplied. A local endurance rider found that the info band fits onto her watchband, so she only has to wear one thing on her wrist and always has the info on her.

Having your cell phone on your body is a must in case you and the horse become separated. Phone cases include belt or arm attachments, or even calf cases (Neoprene options for arm or calf include styles by Cashel, Perri's and Centaur). The calf version is surprisingly comfortable even at conditioning pace, and can be a simple cell phone holder or mini-first aid kit depending on style and size desired. A good addition to the cell phone holder is to insert a copy of your photo ID and medical card for first responders.

For more extensive information on your person, Nunn Finer (ridingwarehouse.com) makes a medical arm band on which you can put a lot of information and is very visible (\$9.95).

The GPS Spot devices provide location-based messaging and emergency notification by satellite. The most basic model, the Spot Gen3 (starting at about \$150), is small and provides limited services. Other models provide satellite phone options, direct conversations, and emergency beacons. All allow for emergency responders to receive your signal and location at least one-way with a basic message (like whether you are broken and need to be lifted out, or need basic first aid). Another local equestrian who often rides by herself uses one of these so her spouse can be notified where she is, in case she doesn't return at the expected time, and she can send him a message that she is fine from anywhere. She says this gives both of them peace of mind.

EquestriSafe also provides safety equipment for the rider: reflective apparel, human first aid kits, and trailer safety decals (CAUTION HORSES).

At the minimum, if you are headed out solo with your horse, make sure someone knows your intended route and what time you left or expect to return.

Reasons why

Most of our local parks are bordered by busy roads or highways, and extensive lands and vineyards. If you and your horse got separated, the horse could become easily confused and scared even if you are riding with others. When someone stops to catch the horse, clear identification makes reunion only a cell phone call away. If you become injured and unable to communicate, that Road ID wrist information could provide immediate necessary information.

Accidents happen. Be prepared. Now, go out and have a fun and safe trail ride!

Sarah Reid (Equus Award 2012) is an equestrian representative to several open space and park projects. If you would like to share trail or public land news with Sarah, or you have an idea for a story, email her at trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org.



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Readers Write

Planting a Selfseed

Written by Susan Eoff

Give yourself the gift of five minutes. Plant a Selfseed.

What are Selfseeds? Selfseeds are kernels self essence which we germinate, nurture, and embrace for wholeness and wellbeing as a human, and to help our ability to connect. Plant Selfseeds in your personal garden and develop them through a program of daily five minute practices, designed to improve your life and relationship with your horse. I have identified eleven Selfseeds worth cultivating...you may recognize some of them: rhythm, nutrition, balance, fitness, and partnering.

Selfseeds grew out of a request to create a "partnering workshop" for equestrians, based on the skills I acquired over twenty years of both ballroom dancing and Dressage. When I considered the concepts of partnership and I connections, I began to realize the importance of areas such as nutrition, fitness, meditation, and emotions. It became clear that the equestrian program should be based on a collective human program addressing the fundamental ingredients of a holistic lifestyle. With these ideas, I was on my way to South Africa and eventually India to get answers about life on the planet. My focal question was, "Do we share a common thread of truth and love that binds us all as two-leggeds?" My hope was to find the same state of inner peace that I experience while in the presence of four-leggeds (horses) and nature. Was it possible?

After a two-year focus on spiritual life, living in and out of an ashram in India, plus a short section acting as a mounted trail assistant in a game reserve in South Africa (galloping with giraffes, standing near rhinos, lions, and cheetahs) the answer appeared to be yes. I came back with ideas, but my seeking didn't preclude me from getting back to the job market.

I chose Sonoma County to return to because it had familiar roots. Two of my mentors lived here, as well: Nancy Kasovich who had been a significant mentor while I was a junior winning the NATRC President's Cup and later a Tevis competitor, and Lilo Fore who had been my mentor in achieving fourth level certification with USDF and a silver medal. Thank you to both!! My return was serendipitous, because Nancy, now one of my dearest friends, needed help with her horses while she recovered from shoulder surgery.

Horses have been my life and my life passion, but somehow the demands of making a living felt like a compromise to the necessary

level of intuition and focus needed for connection. Growing up as a distance rider, nature and partnership were the cornerstones. I found them especially useful as I expanded into techniques for Dressage and jumping. Despite the call and beauty of Sonoma County, I struggled with being centered and undistracted.

I cherished and continued my relationship with Nancy; she is my touchstone to the old school of true horsemen. During one visit we discussed the idea of me writing a book of her life experiences and wisdom. While the technical part is daunting, I am recording and taking notes. Besides being a pleasure and privilege, this was an important event for me, facilitating my focus on horsemanship. Sharing our passion for horses and discussing the evolution from the old school (she was stepping out of professional riding while I was stepping in, ten years later) has answered some of my questions and rekindled a passion for training, riding, and teaching.

Through my return to Sonoma County, and my re-connection with Nancy, the platform for Selfseeds and the practice it supports for rider alignment, sensing, fitness, flexibility, and balance, was born. I found it is possible to teach feel, timing, and connection to the horse irrespective of discipline or breed. I am a certified personal trainer and currently working on Corrective Exercises Training. I hope to combine dismounted exercises and awareness for the rider. In-person lessons are always an option, but the website will support virtual lessons, using submitted video clips for feedback—horse training in the twenty-first century combined with the soul of the ancient mystery schools. Technology rocks!

My teacher in India sent me on a homework assignment to visit the Mother Theresa Mission in Calcutta and to volunteer at the hospital in Jaipur. To witness such pure selfless service was life changing. In my commitment to the soul of the horse, I would like to offer the live presentation of Selfseeds as a donation. Selfseeds has inspired, motivated, and encouraged my personal garden to grow, so see if it can help yours. Visit the Selfseeds community garden and blog, sign up for your daily Selfseed.

Susan Eoff's life is fueled by three passions: horses, ballroom dancing, and spirituality. They have all inspired her to look more deeply into the connections we all share. Susan first connected with horses at an early age. Since then, twenty years of ballroom dancing has provided remarkable insight into the physical and mental construct of unity in motion. She combines the two in her brainchild, Selfseeds. To learn more about Susan and her program, visit www.selfseeds.com or www.waltzinghorses.com.



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