

Sonoma County

# *Horse Journal*

Volume 8 • Issue 4

Fall 2012



*Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council | Home of the Equus Awards*



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**Sonoma County****Horse Journal**

Volume 8 • Issue 3 • Summer 2012

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**Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis**

Belgian drafts Misty and Quinna, of the New Family Farm in Sebastopol, prepare a field for planting. Read more about Misty and Quinna, and other working horses in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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## A Message from the President



Howdy!

Each spring, the Sonoma County Horse Council publicly honors a select few local leading horsemen and women and a special equine, at our signature event—The Equus Awards celebration. Now is your

chance to nominate a special equestrian or horse for the 2013 Equus Hall of Fame. Please complete the nomination form included in this issue of the Horse Journal, or download a copy from our website, [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org). The Equus Awards dinner is jam packed with hundreds of horse lovers. Most importantly, your nominee, should he or she be selected for this prestigious award, will enjoy the night of a lifetime surrounded by family, friends, and fellow equestrians who share the same passion. Don't delay! The nomination deadline is Friday, October 19th, 2012.

We should all be proud that the Sonoma County horse community—more than 20,000 horses and 30,000 horse owners—con-

tributes more than \$300 million per year to the Sonoma County economy and produces the kind of world class equestrians that we honor each year at the Equus Awards banquet. But this community and way of life faces many challenges, from increasing urbanization to regulation to economic pressures. We all need to recognize that if we are to preserve this way of life in Sonoma County, we cannot be complacent and we must be united and organized. Please help us by joining the Horse Council, volunteering for special projects and committees, and staying active in your own horse club. Check out our website for membership applications, contact us to offer your assistance on projects which interest you, and review our notices from other horse clubs who need assistance in preserving our equestrian tradition in Sonoma County.

Please enjoy this issue of the Sonoma County Horse Journal, which is focused on working horses. The Horse Journal is one of the many ongoing projects of the Sonoma County Horse Council.

Ron Malone, *President*

Sonoma County Horse Council

The Sonoma County Horse Journal would like to acknowledge and celebrate the life of

**Elizabeth “Betty” Menefee**

May 6, 1922 – June 21, 2012

*Equus Hall of Fame 2010*



A mother, wife, friend, and horse-lover, Betty was a pioneer in endurance and competitive trail riding.

*May she ride now on the wings of angels.*



# EQUUS AWARDS 2013

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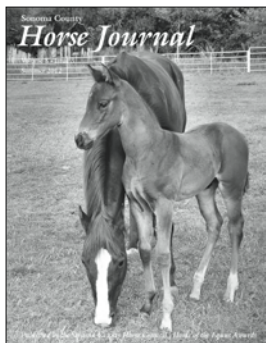
Know a deserving horse or rider? Nominate him or her for an Equus Award! Each year the Sonoma County Horse Council honors a few special local equestrians and one special horse with induction into the Equus Hall of Fame. YOU can decide who wins. Submit your nomination today by filling out the inserted nomination form or visiting our website at [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).

**Deadline: October 19, 2012**





## Friday's News



Friday has had an eventful summer. Aptly named MPH FULL MOON FRIDAY, the young Appendix Quarter horse colt, featured in the last issue of the Sonoma County Horse Journal (see summer 2012), was born this spring on the full-mooned Good Friday. Unknown to his owner, Stacie Martinelli, the convergence of events on the day of his birth portended the months to come. Early in August, at four months of age, attentive owner Stacie noted that Friday had a baby cold. Over the next

few days, his symptoms worsened and the youngster began to have a hard time breathing. Stacie called in veterinary assistance and Friday received antibiotics and steroids at home at the Running C Ranch. Stacie watched him closely, and when he failed to improve she rushed Friday, accompanied by his mom LilBit to UC Davis for care. Friday was diagnosed with pneumonia, and admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit with LilBit at his side. An ultrasound revealed a small lung abscess. Over the next week Friday received intravenous fluids, steroids, and antibiotics, and also breathing treatments. The vets had to open his trachea to obtain a sample for evaluation and identification of the infection causing organism. Stacie visited every day. The antibiotics took three days to kick in, but then Friday improved steadily each day. His



appetite improved and he became playful at the UC Davis facility, enjoying a small grassy turn out. Nine days later, Stacie brought Friday home. He is on antibiotics, and not quite out of the woods yet, but doing better each day. Stacie would like to thank Artaurus Veterinary Clinic, Drs Diane Rhodes and Dominic Dawson and the UC Davis staff for their outstanding care of Friday. She would also like to thank all her family, friends, and HJ readers who offered their kinds words, prayers, and support during Friday's illness.



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## Sonoma County Horse Council at Work

# Horse Cabinet Update

Written by Tony Benedetti, Board of Directors

At the July Horse Cabinet meeting, we were privileged to have as a guest the executive director of the Sonoma County Trails Council (SCTC), Ken Wells. Ken gave us an organized and informative presentation about the history and role of the Trails Council, as well as some details about specific projects. He also let us know how, as equestrians, we can lend a hand in maintaining and protecting our trails.

The Sonoma County Trails Council was founded in 1967. Its mission is to work in partnership with others to advocate, plan, build, and maintain a network of sustainable, shared-use, public trails for non-motorized recreation throughout Sonoma County. Currently the SCTC has approximately 100 members, including equestrians, runners, hikers, and cyclists. The SCTC has played a tremendous role in partnering with local organizations to keep our local state parks open. Currently, they have a regularly scheduled trail work day in Annadel every third Saturday of the month, and several other special projects.

In working with the Parks Alliance, SCTC has accepted an official role as a trail maintenance partner in the operating agreements for Annadel, Jack London, and Sugarloaf Ridge State Parks. In these agreements the SCTC has agreed to provide scheduling, organization, tools, and training for volunteer work days. In addition, they will provide a Trail Response Team for trail repairs and blockages, due to events such as fallen trees and washouts. They will also provide trail planning and construction as needed.

Ken showed us the power point presentation that he gave at the Trails & Greenways Conference in Woodland Hills in April, which detailed last fall's planning and construction of the Ridge Trail thirty-six foot puncheon in Annadel (see photo). Each winter, lower parts of the Ridge Trail suffered significant damage due to wet conditions and erosion from use. The damage to the trail presented a safety hazard to users in addition to disrupting the sensitive meadow ecosystem. One particularly fragile site was selected for placement of a puncheon, or low wooden overpass, to protect the ground underneath. This project included planning the size and shape of the structure, obtaining and hauling materials, down-and-dirty trail work, building, and securing the wooden structure. This project was completed with help from Backcountry Horsemen, members of the Mounted Unit, and the sheriff's office via use of Henry One! The Sonoma County Trails Council received a Merit Award from the Trails and Greenways Conference for its success in coordinating the multi-use collaboration in this important project.

Ken fielded some questions, including updates on current issues around funding and continued park operations. He also discussed plans for future trail building projects, like the eastern slope Mount Sonoma Trail.

For more information about the Sonoma County Trails Council, how you can get involved in protecting and maintaining our Sonoma County trails, and just useful information about how to enjoy our beautiful countryside, visit [www.sonomatrails.org](http://www.sonomatrails.org), or check them out on Facebook.



*The multi-user crew and the Ridge Trail puncheon*

I said the following in a previous Horse Cabinet article and I think I am going to say it every time I write this article. The Horse Cabinet addresses issues important to Sonoma County equestrians through the dissemination of information at its meetings. We want you to attend and tell us what is important to you. Please help the Sonoma County Horse Council meet your needs by being a member; help us help the Sonoma County equestrian community.

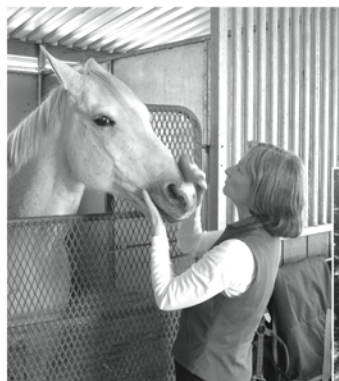
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## Feature Article

# New Family Farm

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Editor at Large



Ryan drives Misty and Quinna, who walk between the rows

Photo: Marie Lewis

Gee. Haw. That's "right" and "left" in the draft horse world... Words from a bygone era, evoking nostalgic images of farmers and mule-skinners guiding their teams.

But those words are in daily use at New Family Farm just west of Sebastopol, where fields are tended by draft teams. Partners Ryan Power and Adam Davidoff have leased the fifteen-acre property for three years, with this being the second season in use. About three acres of the land is under cultivation, and the work is largely performed by authentic horsepower—the four-legged kind, fueled by hay—rather than diesel.

The horses are eight year old Quinna and ten year old Misty, both Belgians, and fifteen year old Sparky, a black Percheron. They are massive, each weighing in at about 2,000 pounds, with hooves the size of dinner platters. The horses are on permanent loan from Work Horse Organic Agriculture (WFOA), a nonprofit organization promoting the use of draft horse farming to support sustainable and organic agriculture in Sonoma County.

I arrived for my visit on a sunny June day. Kids, dogs, and cats were present in abundance, and Misty and Quinna were waiting patiently at the barn for their day to begin. Well, Misty was waiting patiently. Patience is not necessarily Quinna's strong suit.

There are several reasons Ryan and Adam use horses on the farm. The fields are bottom land and tend to be wet, and the horses can get in and do the work where a tractor would bog down. And the sustainability of the horses is a reason as well. As Ryan explains, "The horses reproduce themselves. They graze and keep the grass down, and then they produce manure that we use as fertilizer."

The horses are rotated on eight acres of pasture, which largely meets their nutritional needs. During the working season, they spend their days in a tie barn, harnessed and ready to work. The constant human contact during the day ensures that the horses maintain their manners, essential to their working relationship with

their handlers. Each interaction is an opportunity for training. The horses must always accept the person as the dominant member of the partnership. If you have an occasion to be on the ground next to one of these one-ton animals when he gets fired up, you'll understand that the safety of the horse and the human depends on it.

Power and Davidoff graduated from UC Santa Cruz, studying environmental science. There was not a lot of agricultural education in the curriculum. They initially learned to use teams working with mules on a farm in New Mexico, using methods that were less than refined. Ryan describes the experience as "lots of runaways and near-death experiences." Eventually they discovered Doc Hammill, a Montana veterinarian who studied the methods of the great horseman of the past and present to develop his "gentle horsemanship" method of driving horses. They studied under him and have used his methods to develop their relationship with the draft horses.

The goal is to instill confidence and respect in the horses so that a true working partnership can be established. This results in a safer and certainly more enjoyable farming experience. (Note: New Family Farm will be hosting a Doc Hammill workshop on October 19-21, with both hands-on instruction and auditing. Details can be found at [www.dochammill.com](http://www.dochammill.com).)

An assortment of equipment is drawn by the horses for working the land. Much of it was purchased at auction, and some was purchased new. Several companies are currently making the implements, such as Midwest Leather for harnesses, and Pioneer Farm Equipment, an Amish company which manufactures the metal and wood components. The farm is particularly proud of their Pioneer forecart—the "Cadillac" of forecarts—engineered for versatility and ease of use. A forecart is the equivalent of a tractor: an implement consisting of wheels, seat, and tongue. Various implements can be attached to this forecart. Using the forecart, the horses can plow, disc, harvest, smooth, and spread manure. While horse-drawn implements may seem old-fashioned and relics of the past, many advances have been made in the design of the equipment. For example, some forecarts feature Ground Drive PTOs (Power Take-Offs) that power moving pieces of equipment, although these require larger horse teams to power them.

Harnessing the team is an intricate process involving collars and collar pads, hames (the rigid structures that provide the pulling power), traces (the straps that attach to the implement) plus stabilizing straps and reins. A simple brush is all the preparation it takes before harnessing, but the equipment must be meticulously fit to avoid discomfort and rubbing of the drafts. The reins attach to a six-inch bit and are the lines of communication with the driver. "You're always communicating," notes Power. Check reins prevent the horses from grazing while still allowing freedom of head movement. Blinders are standard issue and improve focus. The horses are connected to ensure they move in unison.





Once hitched, Misty and Quinna are driven to the fields where the various pieces of equipment await them. This is where things get interesting. Once you see 4,000 pounds of equine power being driven by one person, you start to appreciate the training involved and the trust that must exist. Quinna, the feistier of the team, is anxious to go and needs to blow off some steam, making for some lively moments on the way to the field.

Once there, the team is backed up to hitch to the forecart and the job begins. Working the rows of vegetables requires delicate precision, and the team delivers. Watching the amount of action generated by the horses on the way to the field made me appreciate the consistency they delivered while working between the rows.

Ryan tells a story from "The Dirty Life" (by Kristin Kimball) of a woman using a team to plant potatoes late into the day until darkness fell. She worked frantically in the darkness, and then noticed that the team was continuing flawlessly with their work. Able to see in the darkness, they knew what to do and were able to complete the job.

Each horse travels in a furrow (the space between rows) with the



Photo: Marcie Lewis

*The team demonstrates turning, using the plow and harrow*

implement working the planting row, today they were preparing for planting with the plow and harrow, turning the finished crops under with the disc. The process is one of trial and error, seeing which piece of equipment used in a particular way works best for the job to be done. Even a roll of fencing wire is used to break up dirt clods and smooth the tops of the rows.

At the end of each row, the team is turned tightly, side-stepping in unison to begin work on the next row. Delicate lettuces, kale, and beets remain unharmed as the horses each keep to their side of the row.



Photo: Marcie Lewis

*Misty's elaborate harness*

Harvesting and re-planting is done on a weekly basis. The crops are sold to local groceries such as the Sebastopol Whole Foods, to restaurants including Peter Lowell's, and a generous amount goes to food banks. Ryan and David also bring produce to local Farmer's Markets.

While safety is always the #1 concern, accidents can happen. Recently, while working an uneven patch of ground, the equipment started to tip, causing Quinna to bolt. That in turn startled the rest of the team and in a heartbeat a full-blown runaway was in progress. Ryan was at the helm and hung on as long as he could, but eventually was forced to drop the reins and abandon ship, landing face-up on the ground. He recalls the reins fluttering above him, an eerily beautiful sight until the implement in tow came crashing to the ground in close proximity to him. Adam was able to intercept and stop the team before any permanent damage was done. That was the closest call they've experienced, and they are not eager to repeat it! Luckily, neither Ryan, nor any of the horses was injured.

Hard work, long hours, lots of dirt, and an element of danger are all part of the life that these young farmers have opted for, but neither would trade the experience for an easier lifestyle. With a firm belief in the honor of manual labor and the sustainability of organic farming methods, they have chosen a life in harmony with their values. And their giant, gentle equine partners help to make it all possible.

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](http://cowdex.blogspot.com). To reach Joan, email her at [joanras795@gmail.com](mailto:joanras795@gmail.com).



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## Sonoma County Events

# Petaluma Art and Equestrian Festival

Written by Sade Cain

On July 29th, the sound of drag cars zooming down the race way rumbled through the ground and over the mountains to the quiet area of San Francisco Polo Club on Lakeville Highway in Petaluma. The day was lovely. Skies were speckled with clouds and soon the chatter of people filled the air. Venders, performers, and patrons of all kinds showed up for the fifth annual Rotary-sponsored Petaluma Art and Equestrian Festival. What a remarkable event.

As attendees have come to expect, the Festival blended horses, wine, and art, bringing together a wonderful group of patrons and participants...all for a great cause. Proceeds benefit the Petaluma Rotary. The Rotary Club of Petaluma promotes peace at home and around the world by donating funds and materials to improve health, education, and to save lives of children both in the US and internationally.

One of the organizers, Michael Caruana, put together an impressive list of performances from jumping competitions, to Arabian show hack and costume. As the many art and food venders unloaded their items, the bleachers and railing filled with spectators waiting to enjoy the show. Between each demo attendees enjoyed raffles, beer and wine tasting, and opportunities to shop for art work, horse insurance, handmade horse jewelry, hats, and more. Even Costco came out and offered discounted memberships, donating proceeds to the cause.

As the clock struck noon, the day officially kicked off with the color guard, a team of four cowgirls, carrying the American flag and a Petaluma Rotary flag. The opening parade included all the performers who circled the polo arena, then stood as the National Anthem was played. As a first time performer there, and not knowing what to expect, I was pleasantly surprised by the turnout of locals and travelers who came to enjoy the show.

The first performance was a jumping competition with four local jumpers and their fabulous horses. At first the four jumps were low, to allow the horses to warm up. With each round, the jumps were raised a little higher. The goal: to keep the poles in the jump cups! The crowd yelled and cheered as they watched each rider soar higher and higher. One suspenseful moment occurred when a rider almost knocked a pole off, leaving it to teeter in the cup before coming to rest in place. The crowd gasped and fell silent, then sighed and cheered in relief.

My Lusitano Zeloso Intergaro and I performed the Lusitano demonstration. We demonstrated a series of Dressage movements from leg yields, to canter lengthening. I primarily Event with Zeloso,



*The Petaluma Riding and Driving Club Drill Team*



*Local artists exhibited their work*

so it was great to have him in a different show experience that he wasn't used to. He handled it like a pro.

Caryn Reade, and the Petaluma Riding and Driving Club Drill Team led a thrilling demo,

carrying flags as they raced around the arena performing patterns choreographed to fun, crowd pleasing music. Weaving and executing pinwheels at the canter, and sometimes a gallop, looked spectacular as all the girls and horses matched with black cowgirl hats and silver glittery polo wraps!

A variety of Arabian horses followed, demonstrating three types of Arabian riding: show hack, costume, and even side saddle! These Arabs preformed well, truly showing off their flashy movements, partnership with their riders, and patience as they waited their turn to perform. Patti Belanger brought several Arabians, each one having its own personality and demeanor. What a great demonstration of the breed versatility.

Next up, Susan Tomasini, demonstrated the newly popular "Western Dressage" with her Arabian horse. Standing no more than fifteen hands, the beautiful bay gelding held his own, moving lightly and effortlessly to invisible cues on a long and loose rein. Sue performed fifteen meter circles, free walks, and graceful jogs!

The Festival then took on a mystical feel when the Gypsy Vanners entered. The crowd was fascinated as the announcer read the history of these graceful, draft-like equines, with manes that flow almost to the ground. Two young women rode, and the third handler led a stud colt. The black and white Gypsy Vanners appeared to float, with pretty roses and bows intricately woven into their manes. The mini herd was regal. The handler of the stud colt, allowed him to move freely around him, the colt pushing off his hind end and snorting excitedly, head up in the air and nostrils flaring. It was a lovely picture of a horse that is hardly seen, but is growing more and more popular. The Vanners were represented by Stephanie Burlington-Robbins.

If you attended the Art and Equestrian Festival thank you for your support! If you missed it, don't worry, you can catch the great riders, demonstrations, art, local wine and beer tasting, shopping, and fabulous atmosphere next year! For more information about the Petaluma Rotary Club, and the Festival visit [www.paefestival.org](http://www.paefestival.org).

Photos: Marcie Lewis



*Sonoma County Events***Giant Steps Charity Classic**

Written by Beth Porter and Julie Larson

The third annual Giant Steps Charity Classic, held August 1-5, was a tremendous success. Held at the marvelous Sonoma Horse Park in Petaluma, the show brought together top Hunter/Jumpers from across the Western US to compete in events ranging from traditional classics to the Wild Turkey Farm Battle of the Sexes to the innovative Rev Moto Ride and Drive. All proceeds from the show benefit Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center, an organization dedicated to serving children and adults with disabilities from throughout the Bay Area.

A highlight of the show was Saturday evening's Barclays Six-Bar Soirée. While enjoying sumptuous food by Park Avenue Catering, and wines from Grieve Family Wines, Imagery Winery, and Benziger Family Winery (among others), the nearly 400 guests were treated to a lively auction, a moving demonstration by Giant Steps riders, and an exciting six-bar competition in which the riders jumped increasingly high jumps—finishing at over six feet! Sunday's \$30,000 Grand Prix, sponsored by Eden Valley Stables, attracted more than thirty entries, and saw Harley Brown and his amazing mount Cassiato take the prize.

This annual event provides critical operating funds to Giant Steps, including therapeutic riding for more than 100 children and adults with disabilities, as well as care and training for the horses (see related article page 15). The presentation by the Giant Steps riders was structured to demonstrate the physical, cognitive, and emotional/recreational gains that can be made through therapeutic riding.

Physical gains include increased core strength, better balance, improved gross and fine motor skills. Both of the boys who participated in this portion use wheelchairs in their daily lives, but when they ride on their horses' backs they passively receive the motion of walking. For a person who spends much of their time in a wheelchair the stretch, movement, and freedom they feel on a horse is unparalleled.

As horses walk they move their hips up and down as well as forward and backward. This causes the riders hips to move in the same rotational movement. The horses' 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. This strengthens the muscles in their trunk improving their core strength. Using direct reining to steer their horses teaches our riders right versus left and motor planning.

Riders with autism, developmental delay, and attention deficit disorder benefit by learning on the back of their equine friend because the passive movement the rider receives from the motion of the horse stimulates their neural system and promotes learning and language, and cognitive gains. Riders with autism can suffer in a



Gala Champions Harley Brown and Cassiato

busy classroom due to sensory overload. However, the same student sitting on the back of a horse can focus and learn the same lesson due to the calming effect of the rhythmic movement of the horse.

With respect to emotional gains, our riders form important relationships with their

horses. They trust that their horses will carry them safely. In turn, their horses trust that they will treat them with kindness and respect. For some of our riders relationships based on mutual trust are difficult to foster. But as our riders learn that their horses look to them for guidance, their self-worth grows. Our riders are able to learn a lot about themselves from their 1000-pound friends who always speak the truth. Horses teach the values of kindness, confidence, and consistency. Horsemanship lessons extend to humanism as our riders develop relationships with their volunteer team. The supportive environment at Giant Steps is the perfect place to learn.

In addition to youth riders who participated in the demonstration, two Veterans joined. Giant Steps' Veterans program is offered to all veterans free of charge. These riders come to Giant Steps for peace, companionship, and recreation. One of our Veteran riders said that there are only two places where he feels calm: the beach and spending time with his horse at Giant Steps.

For all of the Giant Steps riders there are recreational benefits. Giant Steps offers a place for our 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 rider's parents report that Giant Steps is the only therapy that their child looks forward to each week. Spending time with their horse motivates shut-in veterans to leave the house and children who have seemingly constant therapy sessions to get in the car.

Throughout the five-day event, horses were shown to be marvelous beings. From the prize winning stallion to the pony in the Giant Steps demonstration, all of the horses who participated in the 2012 Charity Classic are winners! For more information about the Giant Steps or the Charity Classic visit our website at [www.giantstepsriding.org](http://www.giantstepsriding.org).



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## Sonoma County Events

# Hoofbeat Horse Show

Written by Judy McHerron



*A young rider on Moving Mike*

Horse shows can bring people together and create a sense of community. On July 1 this was the case at Hoofbeat Park, in Healdsburg. Riders of all levels came from all around Sonoma County to participate in a multi-disciplinary Dressage show. This schooling show offered traditional Dressage tests, Eventing Dressage tests, and the new Western Dressage tests.

This day was also an opportunity for people to support a few of the nonprofit horse organizations in Sonoma County. The proceeds from the show went to benefit the Sonder Ranch Horse Recovery Program, which supports neglected horses in the community. Equi-Ed also benefited, because they brought a trailer load of used and new tack to sell, which was a great hit and helped raise money to support their programs. Equi-Ed also donated prizes for the show. A big thanks to Sandy Dobbins, a member of the Windsor School Board, who provided spectacular food for the show, with try tip, and tomato, basil, and mozzarella sandwiches...not your ordinary horse show faire!

Hoofbeat Park, located just off the intersection of Dry Creek Road and Highway 101, is owned and operated by the Russian River Riders (RRR). The park contains a full-sized arena, a warm up arena, round pen, bleachers for spectators, twenty corrals, and a clubhouse. Hoofbeat Park has been hosting horse shows and events of every discipline, and supporting the community for more than half a century. The Hoofbeats Pony Club a chapter of the United States Pony Club was founded in 1989, and continues its impressive program teaching leadership, knowledge, and equestrian skills to young riders. (For more information on the RRR and Hoofbeat Park, see the Fall 2009 issue of the Horse Journal.)

During the July 1st show, one event-goer called attention to the fact that three faculty members from the Santa Rosa Junior College's Equine Science Department were in attendance. Lisa Lombardi, Max Freitas, and Judy McHerron were all there, along with many present and past students (see above photo). All three instructors enjoyed seeing the college students show off skills that they had learned in the college classes. Such a scene was a testament to the dedication and professionalism that these three women had encouraged and nurtured. Each felt she has witnessed a little piece of success at encouraging, facilitating, and supporting the advancement of their students within the college and the community.

Max, the program director and head instructor for Equi-Ed, a

nonprofit therapeutic riding program in Sonoma County, brought two of Equi-Ed's students to participate. One of the students was experiencing his first horse show. Lisa brought several of her beginning adult students for their first time participating in the Dressage and Western Dressage tests. Judy also brought a first-timer, who had an exciting day, taking home ribbons to show her grandkids!

All the participants went home with ribbons and fond memories of a fun day at Hoofbeat Park. For anyone that missed the festivities and would like to join those planning to come back, the next show will be the Halloween Schooling Dressage, Eventing, and Western Dressage Show on Sunday October 28th. Equi-Ed will hopefully be back with their Tack Sale and we're sure we can twist Sandy's arm to bring great food again for lunch.

This year marks the twentieth year of Judy & Eqwine Events putting together, organizing, and managing horse shows at Hoofbeat Park. The mission of Eqwine Events is to create a show environment where horses and riders have a fun and positive horse show ex-

periences that contribute to the training of the horse and confidence of the rider. Start thinking about a costume for you and your horse and join us for the annual Halloween Costume class!! For more information about events at Hoofbeat Park visit [www.russianriverriders.org](http://www.russianriverriders.org). For more information about Eqwine Events, or the Halloween show email Judy at [eqwine@sonic.net](mailto:eqwine@sonic.net).

*Judy is a riding instructor, event coordinator, National Examiner for the United States Pony Club, SRJC Equine Science Instructor and a recipient of the Sonoma County Horse Council's Equus Award.*



*A happy crew*



*A convergence of teachers*



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*Readers Write***Ranch Horse for Sale: Great for Kids or Grandma**

Written by Kathy Landini

I've always found it interesting that retired ranch horses are often recommended for kids or grandmas. Now, after living and working on The Divide Ranch (our cattle ranch) for thirteen years, I know why.

Our ranch is called Divide Ranch because of its location. It's on "The Divide" just east of the town of Elk Creek in western Glenn County. What this means of course is that our 2,000 acres is spread up and over a ridge. To cover the land, it's up one side and down the other. And then back. The Divide Ranch provides grass-fed beef for northern California. We work in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to practice sustainable ranching, and promote ecological balance on our land.

Some ranch land can be easily managed with a four-wheeler. Add a couple border collies and you're really good to go. But not ours. The country is beautiful, and we have spectacular views, but the hills are high, and the canyons steep. Rocky and uneven, the terrain begs for four legs, rather than four wheels. I'm not claiming that we don't use four-wheelers, they are great for spotting the cattle and then finding the cowgirl(s) and their dogs in order to tell them where to go (actually, a much appreciated gesture). But because whichever way we should go (down and back up, or up and back down?) is rough and untraveled, it's clear we need a ride that's more acclimated to covering rocky, uneven, and steep terrain.

Many times we ride hours just to get one or two cow/calf pairs out of a canyon. Once we are out of the open grasslands there are no roads or groomed trails, just cow trails meandering across the oak studded, shale, or brushy hillsides. Looking at them from across the way one thinks, "How did that cow get there?" However the feat was accomplished, it was done on four hooves. Then, you find a narrow trail, take it slow, and follow it to her. Horse and rider make a couple attempts at asking the cow nicely to "get on out of there," or send the dog and hope a wild boar doesn't become suddenly startled out of his beauty sleep. Occasionally we have to get a little louder and more aggressive. But we eventually move the cows out. During calving season, we must take care not to leave a calf behind while gathering, so a close look is necessary.

While horses can travel into the remote areas of the property better than four-wheelers, there's nothing scarier than being on the back of a horse that is not comfortable in a situation like this.



*Kathy, Maggie, and Charley enjoying the view*



*The Divide Ranch team heads out for another day*

In order to make our horses "ranch" comfortable they are exposed from the very beginning to all of the elements of life on the ranch. We put them in situations to ensure future success. While they are young they are turned out into the hills, not kept in a paddock or pen, so they get a feel for the great outdoors. When close to home they are in a safe pen where there is lots of action—tractors, shop noise, dogs, kids, stock trailers—and most importantly, cattle. There is no better feeling than watching a horse just look towards the action with curiosity instead of fear. Ponied out on the ranch behind older experienced horses, the younger ones catch a glimpse of what's to come. They can get a look without getting into too much trouble and they have a "buddy." They soon learn though that the "buddy" does not last long. One of the most important qualities of a great ranch horse is that she can head out with you and the dog and not look back. A lot of time is spent alone on the range, no buddy for the horse or the cowgirl, and the horse must be paying attention. They have to be in shape, too. They travel long miles over rough terrain, and then turn around, and do it again the next day.

My horses and I have accomplished some great things and come a long way to together. I take no responsibility for "training" them in the "starting a horse" sense. I have left that to my daughter and one of my best friends. But what I do take credit for is riding them and keeping them safe and healthy. Our horses get tired. Many mornings I am known to look at my favorite horse Maggie after some long days and say, "I'm sorry Maggie, but we gotta go..." and she does, willingly. Rain or shine. And just so you know, I've been known to get off and walk...right alongside her.

Our ranch is a working cattle ranch; we care for our cattle, our horses, our dogs, our land...and most importantly our family and friends. One way we do all that is to make sure we have the safest and hardest working horses possible. And when they are ready to retire...they'll be good for the grandkids. Oh, and Grandma, too!

*Kathy Landini is a Buckarett. She grew up in Palo Alto, but from day one she knew she needed wide-open space. She met her husband of twenty-five years, Mike, at Chico State. In 1999 Kathy and Mike, along with their two children, Nicole and Tony, moved to Elk Creek to pursue their dream of owning a cattle ranch. Fellow Buckarett, Pinie Minto says, "God just picked them up, and dropped them right where they belong." For more information about the Divide Ranch, and sustainable cattle ranching, visit [www.thedivideranch.com](http://www.thedivideranch.com).*



## Readers Write Actors!

Written by Ted Draper



Ted's horse, Viva, performs in "Dream Horse" (2008, Shaffer Travis Production)

Some horses work as actors in films and commercials. We've trained horses to both "act," and work as "stunt doubles." To be on film, horses sometimes just perform regular horse behavior, and other times have to do something special. Here are some examples of what we've done with our horses in film over the years.

We worked on a movie called "The Quest of the Delta Knights," (1993, directed by James Dodson) filmed here in Sonoma County. We provided eight horses for the actors and stunt people to ride. The actors spent a week at our stables getting to know the horses and taking lessons. The horses also had to get comfortable with the crew (non-horse people) and the cameras. I had a wrangler with each horse to help the actor and to ride the horse through the scene.

For one scene, a horse had to drag a man on the ground. I fitted the horse with a special padded breast collar, and practiced with a sack of grain, then a small stunt person. For that scene I rode the horse as a double for the actor. In another scene, one of our driving mares pulled a wagon through a meadow with peasants walking alongside. The mare had to remain calm when the wagon was attacked by fast moving riders, with people and horses running all around. The attackers even rode up and grabbed the driver (my son, acting as stunt double), throwing him to the ground. Even with no one holding the reins, our mare did not move. We rehearsed this scene over and over, and the filming took all day. Even for the simplest scenes, we walked the horses through several times before we let the actors go for a practice run. Then the cameras rolled. The directors were really pleased.

When we filmed "The Sweetest Thing," (2002, directed by Roger Kumble) with Cameron Diaz, our horses had to respond quickly and willingly, even to actors who are not horsemen. I had to drive my team of horses down a street and under a movable camera boom. Well my horses had never seen such a thing, and were afraid to go near it. I took twenty minutes to allow the horses to examine the lowered boom, and soon the horses were not afraid

and walked by several times before shooting the scene. This time we had to do four takes before the director was happy.

In one commercial for a water company, the director wanted a pretty white horse standing loose, knee deep in water. On command, the horse had to run through the water and drop his head, drinking water offered by a small boy. The scene took place in a small stream in the woods. To get the horse to move through the water, I led the horse up thru the water several times, and rewarded him with grain. I had my son take him back to the original spot, and turn him to face me and the camera. When the director said, "Action!" Tom turned him loose and told him to trot, and he charged right through the water to me. Perfect! The director was thrilled. The next difficult scene was getting the horse to stand quietly (without halter) in the water as the special effects guy covered the water with smoke. For this we just hobbled him under the water. They also wanted the horse to stand untended, without halter, on the top of a very tall hill as the

moon rose up behind him. When the moon was in the right position, I hobbled him, as well. On cue he reared up and stayed up long enough to get the picture.

Besides being trainable, and having an agreeable personality, movie horses have to endure long hours, sometimes working late into the night. They have to rehearse just like people, before the cameras roll. One film we worked on had a night scene, and fire torches lit up the area around where the horses were tied. They had to be nonchalant about it. To make this work, my wife and I hid in the shadows, using objects like the water trough to hide, and held the horses. In another night scene, one horse got shot with an arrow (another good special effect), and had to limp. To make the limp, I cut a golf ball in half and fixed it in his shoe. He limped a few strides, and that was all the director needed.

Training a horse to lie down, rear up, paw, bow, or work from voice commands takes hours at home. The horse must do his part for only a few seconds in front of the camera. Some are camera shy and other horses come alive and show off, just like people. Training the movie horse is lots of work and frustrating at times, but very rewarding when the horse does his job well, and we hear, "It's a wrap!"





*A Horseman's View***Cross Country Training at Eventful Acres**

Column editor Toora O'Mahoney

As a Three Day Eventing trainer, it's important that I allow my students and horses the opportunity to regularly school across country. Yes, we can simulate many Cross Country questions (jump(s) demanding a more technical ride) through creative course design inside the arena, but there's nothing like being able to jump and gallop over natural terrain! We recently spent several days training at one of my favorite California facilities, Eventful Acres, which is situated in the Sierra foothills about thirty minutes east of Marysville ([www.eventfulacres.net](http://www.eventfulacres.net)). Eventful Acres is owned and operated by Rod and Karen Hisken, who have designed and built hundreds of Cross Country jumps on their thirty-five acre property. From tiny logs for beginners to upper-level questions that challenge boldness, balance, and accuracy, Eventful Acres is a unique place that offers something for everyone. In addition to the great riding amenities, the horses are stabled outside in shaded paddocks with riders and family camping beside. The fields are well irrigated and beautifully manicured so the horses can enjoy plenty of hand-grazing after the rigors of training.

My group for this particular outing consisted of a wide range of skill levels. Two horses on opposite ends of the spectrum were Zurprise, a five year old Holsteiner mare (on her first trip away from home), and Electrick, my fearless twenty-two year old upper level schoolmaster. It was wonderful to have these two horses working in the same group, as the veteran was on-hand to reassure the rookie that all of these strange scenarios were actually quite fun. Zurprise was very willing and brave over all the logs, coops, ditches, and banks that she was introduced to. The biggest challenge for her was crossing water. She was perfectly comfortable sniffing it and getting her front toes wet, but it was another thing getting her to trust that it was safe to walk all the way in and through to the other side, especially in darker water where the bottom isn't visible. Zurprise watched Electrick gleefully trot and canter through the water, and decided she was going to take the plunge. After a few tries, she began to realize how much fun splashing around in the water can be. By the next day, she was happily leading the way through three different water complexes, as well as through the creek in a shaded ravine. I'm really looking forward to this horse's next few schoolings, as she is thriving with each new challenge placed before her!

*Toora and Raydiance at Eventful Acres*

In addition to all of the work over fences, I had my students practice pace work on their horses. For the Cross Country phase in Eventing, it's not enough to just jump all the fences on course; one must also strive to complete the course at an optimum speed. Ride too fast or too slow and you'll incur 0.4 time-penalties per second. Those points add up quickly and can be a silly way to drop down in the standings. In order to have a flowing, steady, and clean round, it's necessary to have a clear understanding of how the right pace feels on each particular horse. At novice level, for example, the optimum speed is generally between 350 and 400 meters per minute. This speed could feel like a slow, relaxed canter on a large Warmblood, or it could require pushing for a gallop on a short-strided pony. Eventful Acres has excellent footing, so I was able to measure a 2000-meter track for the riders to practice their feel for speeds from 220 meters per minute (forward working trot) to 470 meters per minute (very strong canter or gallop). I stood by with a stopwatch to track their speed. Everyone was successful in feeling the correct competition speed for their particular level, which will give them that much more confidence the next time they are out on course. Pace work can be useful practice for horses and riders of any discipline as it's a great way to improve fitness, balance, responsiveness, and confidence out in the open.

When you think about it, it's surprising how little time many of us spend working outside of an arena! Riding out over varied terrain at any pace is an acquired skill that requires practice and repetition. For faster paces, look for consistent footing that's spongy but firm with minimal holes. Where's the best footing in our region for galloping? The beach during low tide, of course! The smooth, wet sand is a great surface to work on if you don't have anything suitable at home. Make sure you shorten your stirrups so that you are able to get off of your horse's back. The short stirrups will also give you more leverage to press into if your horse gets too strong or frisky. Remember to be patient as you progress from slow trot work to more forward gallops. You should feel balanced, relaxed, and in harmony with your horse before moving on to the next step. Now get out of the ring and have fun!

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## Readers Write

# Equi-Ed's Workforce

Written by Sheila McCarthy

Horses in therapeutic equestrian programs have a very special job to do and work hard providing positive experiences for their students. It takes a superstar horse who enjoys interacting with many volunteers and students, and who can remain focused and steady in a lesson with a special needs rider. Being involved at Equi-Ed allows staff, students, and volunteers the opportunity to get to know some of these incredible horses on a close level.

At Equi-Ed we have a variety of horses to best meet the needs of our diverse students, who might be a first time four year old student with autism gathering courage to sit astride a horse, or a returning adult student with developmental delays learning to canter a pattern for a show. Our diversity also allows us to provide a range of activities for students from riding and vaulting, to horsemanship and competition. For almost twenty years, we have focused on building a herd in which each member demonstrates reliability, gentleness, and responsiveness. We have carefully selected ponies, donkeys, draft horses, Arabs, Thoroughbreds, mini's, Paso Finos, Quarter Horses, Standardbreds, Fjords, and much more. To make the cut, each horse's profile (sort of a horsey resume filled out by the owner) is carefully scrutinized. The horse is assessed in its home environment, and then brought in for a one to six month trial. We ask: How does it react to novel stimuli (wheelchairs and walkers?)? What is its spook response? How does it handle an off balance rider? How does it respond both on and off lead? Will it handle trails, alone and with other horses? Plus more! I'd love to introduce you to a couple current hardworking equines, all of whom have made the cut!

**Cisco** is a registered Quarter Horse who has been with the program for close to eight years. He is a very sensitive and sweet soul. He provides a narrower base of support for students who may have tighter adductor muscles and find a wider horse harder to sit. His sensitivity also makes him a good choice for a rider with limited or no use of their legs, as it doesn't take a big cue for him to move out. Volunteer Barbara says, "I have known darling Cisco for seven years. He is a loving, sensitive, willing horse. He has a joyous personality and a big heart."



**Pogo** is an eight year old silver bay Falabella cross who is as feisty as her name suggests. While her antics keep us laughing, she is very serious about her job of driving. She works with students who may be unable to ride, but who can learn how to ground drive. She's the boss and can often be found wheeling about the pasture, letting the other horses know



exactly how she feels about them. Her breeder reports she bossed not only the weanlings, but also the broodmares! Big pony attitude with this little girl! She has been with the program since 2006.

**Tooe**y (Too Tall) is a twenty year old palomino mustang gelding who came to us as an unknown, aside from a BLM brand. He was donated after being abandoned at a boarding facility in the East Bay. Just this past year we received an amazing email that helped fill in the gaps about his story.



*"Hi, my name is Becky. I came upon your website and recognized Tooe*y. He was my first horse. I got him when I was about eleven years old (I'm twenty-seven now). Unfortunately due to some family issues we had to sell our horses. He was great...and we won a lot at shows. He is a mustang from the Nevada plains. He was rescued when he was a baby and named "Too Tall" because his owner raised miniature horses. The nickname "Tooey" just stuck. She apparently used to sit out in the pasture with him and read "Charlotte's Web" until he got used to her. I got him soon after and we learned a lot together. My dad still has a picture of me on Tooey stuck in a pond because he refused to get out, having too much fun splashing...I'm so glad he is a therapy horse now. I'm happy he can make such a positive difference in people's lives."

Tooey was a very special horse for his former owner and continues to be a very special horse for all the students who ride or vault with him. Tooey has been with the program for two and a half years.

**Little Bit** has served with Equi-Ed the longest—for ten years. She is also the oldest member of the workforce at age twenty-seven, but don't tell her that! She is still showing with Equi-Ed students and enjoys a good gallop on the trail and even a few low jumps with her owner on her days off. She is an Appaloosa mare who in her younger days competed in endurance, helped map out state park trails and competed in Dressage. She is the perfect horse for a rider's first canter, very smooth and will keep an even and rhythmical gait. She loves gymkhana and can do some vaulting for the youngest students. "Little Bit has an air of wisdom to her that just makes her such a wonderful horse for the students," according to Volunteer PJ.



To get to know our horses even better, consider volunteering your time. Just two hours/week makes a huge difference in the lives of both horses and students! Horse experience is valued, but not a necessity. For more info, email Sheila at [infoequied@aol.com](mailto:infoequied@aol.com), find us on Facebook, or give us a call at (707) 546-7737.

*Readers Write*

# Hoofbeats and Heartbeats: Who Are the Horses of Giant Steps?

All riders—from Hunter/Jumpers to Reiners to weekend trail riders—innately understand the physical and emotional benefit that comes with riding a horse, so none are surprised to learn how effective therapeutic riding is for disabled children and adults. As they do with everything, horses give their all to the equine therapy work, sensing the riders' needs and abilities with a heartfelt equine wisdom that frequently surpasses human understanding.

But what does it take to be a therapy horse? How are the Giant Steps horses selected? The process is a careful one. First, a team from Giant Steps visits the horse, and evaluates how the horse reacts to various stimuli. Only the most stalwart, unflappable horses are suited to our program. If the evaluation is successful, the horse moves to our barn for an initial assessment period of at least two months. At first, we let the horse acclimate to the barn, get to know the herd, and grow accustomed to being groomed and tacked by different experienced volunteers. Next, the horse will participate in classes without a rider, merely following along, growing comfortable to being led, and to having volunteers walk alongside. Over time, a rider will be added...most likely an able-bodied volunteer. Then, if all has gone smoothly, will graduate to hosting our fabulous riders, and will ultimately join our team.

As we evaluate the horse, we are also looking for someone who adds to our herd. Each horse at Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center has a unique personality, as well as the temperament, physical attributes, and experience that make for a successful therapy horse. Several were bred specifically for equine therapy work; others come from previous careers. Not every horse is suited for equine therapy work, and each brings unique skills. Instructors match each rider with the horse whose temperament, physical characteristics, and experience most closely fit the rider's needs.

To help understand the types of horses who serve as our equine therapists, we'd like to introduce you to a few of our team.

**Scarlet**, the Grande Dame and lead mare at Giant Steps, is a Tennessee Walker. She's a "type A" personality who loves to be in charge. She's the official greeter whenever someone enters the barn. It's no accident that she's in the first stall. She will even chastise you if you greet another horse first. Scarlet is a born leader. Mares and geldings follow her firm direction, and she even tries to direct people if given the chance. But Scarlet is a benevolent leader and she carefully protects her rider as one of her own. Scarlet teaches confidence.



**Katydid**, a genteel lady, is also a Tennessee Walker. In 2010, she was awarded Horse of the Year by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (Region 11). Any rider would feel at ease with Katydid. She is sweet, well-adjusted, and understanding. She likes to walk fast, and she will match her side walker, step for

Written by Giant Steps Staff



step. One of Katydid's favorite riders is a woman in her 80's. Katydid is a patient, willing, teacher for those who are learning the fine art of grooming horses. Katydid teaches body awareness and quietness.

**Pepé**, a nine year old Tennessee Walker, is the class clown of the barn. It's hard to imagine being gloomy for too long in the presence of this slapstick comedian who flaps his lips, tosses his head, and wags his long tongue

from side to side, while stomping his hooves. He is affectionate and loves attention. Pepé works well with riders who have an animated form of autism. His boisterous nature draws the rider's attention and has a calming effect. Pepé teaches concentration.



**Corky** is a handsome dark bay Morgan who came from UC Davis where he taught English style riding and Dressage. He's like a giant teddy bear with a plush winter coat that is the envy of all the other horses in the barn. He is short in stature in comparison with the other geldings, but he doesn't let his smaller stature deter him from bossing around the big guys. He likes to stir things up in the herd when they are romping in the

exercise area. He does especially well with riders who need to work on stability and balance. Corky teaches strength.

To learn more about our program (including meeting the entire equine staff!), to join our corps of fabulous volunteers, or to make a cash gift to our equine support fund, please visit [www.giantstep-riding.org](http://www.giantstep-riding.org).

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## Readers Write

## Size Doesn't Matter

Written by Suzanne Rose Kritz

Do you remember the first time you met a miniature horse? It was probably at the petting zoo. Maybe you were thinking how cute she was being only as tall as your waist, and what most people think about these little guys: cute, but they do not do anything. It turns out that this assumption is not correct! Among the many talents of these little horses are showing in performance classes, pulling carts, and acting as service and therapeutic animals.

The miniature horse (or "mini") can be traced back to the early 1700's where it originated in northern Europe and England. Miniature horses were kept by royalty as exotic pets, but also worked pulling heavy loads of coal in the mines. They performed similar work in the 1800's in the North America. One breed originated in Argentina. Due to the fact that minis are so proportionately like horses, they are categorized as horses rather than as ponies. Even now, some debate still exists about this grouping. The two most well-known miniature horse registries in the country are the American Miniature Horse Association (AMHA), and the American Miniature Horse Registry (AMHR). To be part of the AMHA, a miniature horse may not exceed a height of thirty-four inches at the withers. More inclusive, the American Miniature Horse Registry allows two groups of minis: 1) miniature horse A which does not exceed thirty-four inches, and 2) miniature horse B which stands between thirty-four and thirty-eight inches.

Similar to any other breed, these small horses are used for show. Minis are shown in many disciplines and classes, and generally begin their careers at one year of age (excluding classes where the babies are shown with their mothers). Events include in-hand Hunter/Jumper, Halter, Driving, Showmanship, Obstacle, and Versatility. Versatility could be considered mini "Three Day Eventing" because it includes Jumping, Driving and Halter. Among those who have taken part in these competitions is local horsewoman Kimberly Sweatt. Currently, Kim competes in AOTE (amateur owned, trained, and exhibited) with her six miniature horses. Over the past thirteen years, she has competed in close to 100 shows, mainly in the western states, but also including Oklahoma and North Carolina. Additionally, she has taken her minis to the AMHA World Show in Fort Worth, Texas multiple years running and placed well. For those who are unfamiliar with this type of showing, the big question when attending these shows is "How did these exhibitors find the right horse for competing?" Many attendees find themselves wondering what makes a mini suitable. While talking to Kim, she informed me of the many characteristics considered in the decision to purchase the horse for showing. "While a horse might have pretty features, or a beautiful color, it's good conformation that is imperative! I also like a horse with a kind eye, and a calm and willing disposition (but still possessing that 'look at me' attitude). A good work ethic is an extremely valuable asset as well." Of course, the ability of the handler is equally important as the quality of the horse.

Outside the show arena, miniature horses have other very important roles. Many act as therapeutic companion animals in different medical facilities such as nursing homes, assisting living facilities,



Suzanne and Gypsy Rose

hospice programs, hospitals, and other facilities like schools. In order to become a certified therapy animal the miniature horse must pass a series of challenges. These challenges are a way to evaluate the horse to see how he will respond in uncomfortable situations. For example, some of the challenges the mini may have to face are having their forelock or tail pulled, ignoring rustling plastic or paper bags, ignoring screaming or arguing between people, overenthusiastic people, being brushed, petted, kissed, and hugged. Therapeutic minis must tolerate activities such as brisk walking, and carts moving by—events

that may put some minis into "panic/spook" mode. The therapeutic miniature horse brings joy and hope to elders, and to those suffering. They encourage the patients that there are still wonderful events in life, and love, and they inspire people to look forward to each day. While visiting schools, a miniature horse can be more valuable than a dog; the horse indirectly illustrates to the students that it is ok to be unique and different from the herd.



Miniature horses are now also used as service animals, like seeing-eye dogs. Service minis must meet certain size criteria, and be "house broken." Use of minis for service is particularly helpful when disabled individuals are allergic to dog hair, or desire a service animal with a

longer life span. The Guide Horse Foundation is the leading organization which supports this new role for miniature horses.

Miniature horses are more than just cute. They have evolved into versatile equines which are not only impressive in the show ring, but also as companions and service animals. For more information about miniature horses, visit the American Miniature Horse Association website at [www.amha.org](http://www.amha.org).

Suzanne Rose Kritz is a senior honors student at Pacific Community Charter High School. Suzanne lives in Gualala, California where she trains in Eventing with her Thoroughbred Bally Reefe, and has competed with her miniature horse Noyo Rivers Gypsy Rose through AMHA in Hunter/Jumper.

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## Spitting Sand—A Learner's Journey

# Working Horses

Column editor Jessica Boyd

The phrase "working horses" conjures up images of dusty cow ponies under crusty cowhands, chasing undulating waves of cattle over plains of scrubby brush and dry grass. But in this day and age work is a different thing for every horse... And a horse with a job is a happier, healthier horse. It doesn't even have to be the job they were bred for, either, as we found out. Take three ex-racehorses in various stages of their new careers, toss in one Cutting-horse bred mare learning Dressage and let the learning begin (for all of us). Each horse has a very different personality and different training.

Teaching a smart, opinionated animal who outweighs you to do any job—let alone a new job—takes finesse, ingenuity, and sometimes a little horse psychology, too.

Kiddo is six, fresh off the track, and full of himself. He does not yet know what he doesn't know. Calabar has been off the track since bowing his tendon in 2004, loafed around until 2007, and then quickly began showing me how much I didn't know. It took me a little while to figure out what he didn't know and we are just now beginning to define work. Forrest has been off the track about a year and a half and he loves his job, whatever it is Katie chooses for him that day. Lena is not off the track, but sometimes acts like she is, with the additional athleticism needed to leap ten feet sideways tossed into her repertoire of tricks. She likes fun things and food, not necessarily in that order.

We are just learning about Kiddo. He is strong and confident and extremely athletic, even as he recovers from the bowed tendon that ended his racing career earlier this year. He transitioned to the new facility here in Sonoma County pretty well, and is just now ready to start back under saddle. He was a fast and fairly successful racehorse, winning nearly \$74,000 in twenty-eight starts from 2009 to 2012, but we don't know yet how he will be to teach or how well he will learn. He definitely needs to start work, though— if only to keep him from pestering his neighbors.

Calabar, as it turns out, is lazy. I once wrote a blog post beating myself up for taking away his "go." I have since realized he was using his go to get out of work by dumping me. Bad pony. We have worked through that and he does not try to dump me anymore and I also ride better, which helps. His new tactic is plodding and this horse can plod like nobody's business. This requires aids, so I'm learning to master the Dressage whip and spurs, but I also have to incorporate more fun in our routine. There are only so many circuits of the arena we can take before the scenery blurs and the yawning starts. He is incredibly forward on the trail, so my challenge is to come up with ways to keep us both entertained and engaged. We played with the barrels recently, which actually sparked some interest and gave me some other ideas for encouraging forward movement.

Forrest did not like to race, which is how he ended up with Katie, but he does like to work. She has managed to teach him to slide



*Forrest not only runs, but he slides*

stop pretty well for a long-legged Thoroughbred. He switches leads beautifully (now on command) and they have started on barrels, too. He is always excited to come out and see what she wants to do. He is also great on the trails and recently learned how to swim. I'm not sure that counts as work, but it made Katie happy. Forrest is an eager, trainable horse and I have yet to see him refuse to at least try if she asks. He may not have ever gotten to the winner's circle, but his motto seems to be, "Okay, what's next?!" which makes him easy to train, but keeps Katie on her toes

coming up with the next challenge.

Lena Rey was supposed to be a Cutting horse, is built like a spotty Thoroughbred instead, and definitely has her own ideas about what work is. A Dressage person once said, "I don't usually like Quarter Horses, but that mare could do anything." And she can. You just have to make it seem like it's her idea. She is a great trail



*The spotty horse Lena "works" at Dressage*

horse—strong, curious, and athletic—but needs the arena work to stay fit and supple. Steve's motivation to ride in the arena has been very slim of late and Lena seems to know it. Enter Allie to teach the spotty horse a little about long and low. Some people say you should stick to one discipline and maybe

if we were showing competitively, that would make sense. Lena loves the different things she's learning and will run barrels with Steve then work on Dressage with Allie...sometimes all in the same day. It has actually made her ride smoother and has also improved her physically. "Her neck seems longer!" said Lena's favorite masseuse, Karen MacDonald, the last time she was out. Besides that, the more Lena gets ridden, the better she is and the less her antics turn destructive.

It is not always easy, Forrest notwithstanding, to convince your equine partner this new thing you want is in their best interest. Pushing Calabar is a huge hurdle for me, but he responds a little better each time; Lena is blossoming with her multi-faceted training; Kiddo is as yet an unknown. The challenge each presents to us is what pulls it all together. Figuring out what works to teach each horse is what gets us ready for the next lesson and makes us all better horse-people. That may actually make them smarter than we are.

*Jessica Boyd lives in Sonoma County and blogs with some regularity about all her horses and their adventures at Spotty Horse News, <http://www.spottyhorse.blogspot.com>. You can reach Jessica and her herd at [spottyhorse@gmail.com](mailto:spottyhorse@gmail.com).*



## Trails and Open Spaces

# The Vision of Saving Our Parks

Column editor Sarah Reid

*"A vision is a powerful thing. It is a dream based on a clear perception of the future combined with a commitment to take the necessary steps to make it happen."*

— William Penn Mott Jr

### State parks: remember them?

Mr. Mott was not an equestrian that I know of, but he was an exceptional visionary for our state and national parks systems. During his tenure as the Director of California State Parks, 1967 through 1974, Mr Mott fought successfully to expand and preserve the state's natural resources. Another visionary, Phil Frank, creator of syndicated cartoon strip "Farley" chronicled current events of the Greater Bay Area. His characters were set in Asphalt State Park, one of forty-nine real California State Parks faced with closure back in the 1980's. Farley himself evolved to a seasonal ranger in the strip. The 1980's ... and we thought the park's closures is a new thing. It's not, and our community will need to continue its support to keep our local parks open.

William Penn Mott Jr, along with visionaries John Muir and John Olmstead, shared dreams of providing places for people to recreate where lands were managed and resources protected. We have a responsibility to uphold protecting the future of these lands... for future use, for our use. State tax dollars are simply not enough to maintain the parks and open lands. We have experienced this. Thankfully our most local Diablo Vista District State Parks have been kept open—for now, for a year or so—by community agencies, with community support. This article describes which local organizations negotiated agreements with the state to keep our parks open for at least this first year. But our support must be ongoing, with continued fundraising and volunteer efforts, perhaps even local tax measures, after these initial successes. Unfortunately not all our local parks have been saved, and many remain open under only temporary contracts.

### Annadel State Park, Santa Rosa

July 1, 2012 Sonoma County Regional Parks (SCRCP) entered into an agreement with the state to assume operation of Annadel State Park in Santa Rosa. Providing general operating management of the park includes rangers, fee collection, general maintenance like bathrooms and roads, land and natural resource management, general oversight of all uses of the park, and a whole lot more than most of us realize. The agreement with the state required



View of Sonoma Mountain, descending from the London park summit

approval by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. While the county is sharing in operation and management of the land, Annadel is still considered a state park, and is subject to the rules and regulations dictated by the state. Friends of Annadel (FOA) group was developed to support the running of this special park. FOA incorporates agencies and friends who are coming together to provide services, and to help Annadel become more vital. FOA includes groups such as SCRCP, Parks Alliance, Sonoma County

Trails Council, Sonoma County Bike Coalition, Mounted Assistance Unit, Bicycle Assistance Unit, Back Country Horsemen, LandPaths, Valley of the Moon Natural History Association, and Annadel Half Marathon. Great news—SCRCP passes, in addition to your California State Park passes—can be used to park at the Channel Drive lot in Annadel starting July 1st. This group seeks continued growth in members, groups, and neighborhood associations to generate fundraising, events, education, volunteerism, and interpretation of the park. Equestrians have always been strong supporters of Annadel, and offered valuable support in avoiding closure. While we have passed the first hurdle in gaining the contract with the state, the FOA is still working to demonstrate enough funding for the second year of operation. The SCHC is partnering with SCRCP to organize an equestrian contribution drive. Stay tuned for details.



At Annadel's Lake Ilseño, Sarah (far left), with Supervisor Shirlee Zane (next to Sarah) and Caryl Hart, Director of Regional Parks (middle)



**Jack London State Historic Park, Glen Ellen**

Under the new name of Jack London Park Partners (JLPP), this organization is making the park sparkle with polish and promise. Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (VMNHA) was really the first group in California to present a partnership proposal to State Parks. On May 1st, opening the park with the new name, VMNHA broke "new ground" for Sonoma County's state parks. VMNHA still runs the volunteer programs for the three parks, but Park Partners now operates Jack London and helps support the volunteer programs. Because this park has valuable cultural and historical artifacts, documenting the personal history of Jack London and his family, it requires more staffing. JLPP provides three paid Park Aides who provide park user assistance at the kiosk and museum and various park programs, and an executive director. JLPP coordinates fundraising programs, park maintenance, trail maintenance with Sonoma County Trails Council, and other general park operations. Equestrians play a large role in this park, using a new scheduling grid to cover all the trails in order to assess trail integrity and maintenance needs.

**Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, Santa Rosa**

"Team Sugarloaf" is made up of several organizations led by the Sonoma Ecology Center. Other supporting organizations include Valley of the Moon Observatory Association to run the Robert Ferguson Observatory, Sonoma County Trails Council for trail maintenance, Valley of the Moon Natural History Association for the visitor center and volunteer coordination, and United Camps, Conferences, and Retreats to run the campground. This Team has made it possible to keep Sugarloaf and the campground open starting June 1st. Sugarloaf provides multi-use trails spanning a huge variety of difficulty levels—trails in shady canyons, strolls on Meadow Trail, climbs to open chaparral with views to St Helena, Mt Diablo, the Sierras and the ocean. Sugarloaf Ridge, like the other state parks is multi-use, but many trails are designated for certain users only and seasonal. Check the signs for details. Also unlike Annadel and Jack London, some of the terrain is difficult and rough, so you and your horse should be fit before undertaking the climbs. The Master Plan here includes an equestrian campsite, historically in use before the observatory, as well.

**Sonoma Coast State Park/Austin Creek State Recreation Area, West Sonoma County**

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods, the non-profit partner for the Russian River District, recently reached an agreement with the state to ensure Austin Creek remains open and Sonoma Coast has limited or no service reductions. Stewards' proposal to the Ca State



*From top of East Ridge Trail at Armstrong/Austin Creek*

Parks for operations management of the area included re-opening camping in the Pomo Canyon and Willow Creek Campgrounds at the Sonoma Coast State Park and Bullfrog Pond Campground at Austin Creek, providing volunteer patrols, and renewed opportunities for public access. Armstrong Woods has just instituted a Mounted Assistance Unit program for help with patrols in the park. Austin Creek is the backcountry of Armstrong Redwoods, accessible to equestrians only through Armstrong. Austin Creek has a regular campground and backcountry hike-in campsites, true backcountry trails, and rugged vistas across the west county hills.

**Why parks?**

Parks are a vital part of our communities, even if you do not use them yourself. Parks provide a place for recreation, education, camping, solitude, nature, enjoyment, opportunities for volunteerism. They provide benefits to surrounding businesses in a multitude of ways. They draw people to visit our beautiful and diverse Sonoma County. Parks bring us back to the land.

Do you enjoy a park? If so, what have you done for your favorite park lately? Come out and volunteer. Your involvement is the only way your favorite park will stay open, year after year.

*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](mailto:trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).*

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## Readers Write

## Indian Valley Carriage: Magic Thrown in for Free

Written by JoDean Nicolette



Gary, Bo, and Honey lead the Connestoga wagon tour

Gary Sello actually only has two employees: Bo and Honey. They have been working for him for about five years. They are originally from Virginia, and Gary met them in Nebraska, bringing them home from there. As jobs go, it's actually not bad work. Bo and Honey put in two to eight hours/day, two to three days per week. Clients are usually adoring, in gleeful moods, and ready to have a great time. The salary's not much, but benefits include the uniform (a chrome-studded harness), the equipment (a carriage or a wagon), a roof over their heads, and some hay. Perks include lots of smiles, many carrots, and copious pets from enamored adults and kids. Of course Bo and Honey are deserving. They are eight year old, multi-talented Percheron/Thoroughbred crosses, who pull carriages for Gary at Indian Valley Carriage. These quadriped half-siblings have held down their jobs for about five years. And they aren't likely to be leaving soon. Gary calls them level-headed, dedicated, and competent.

Gary founded Indian Valley Carriage rides in 2002. After successful careers in youth advocacy, computer consulting, and management, a serious illness gave Gary cause to take inventory of his life. He decided it was time to follow his dream. Now Gary lives and works with horses, interacts with people, and brings happiness to his clients. "Horses make people smile," says Gary, "When little kids see them, it changes the whole contour of their walk!"

Gary has always loved horses. As a teenager he lived on a ranch in Marshall. He was a 4-H leader and rode horses to his heart's content. When his sons were young, Sello ran the Novato Junior Horsemen organization, and he has served as president of the Novato (senior) Horsemen, a group of 400 riders. In 1976 he bought the Indian Valley home where he still lives. Gary's kids, thirty-three year old Levi, and twenty-nine year old Gabriel, grew up there. Sello and his wife, Cele Hanzel, still share the house with her twin sister and brother-in-law and at least one pony for the many grandchildren and extended family. Gary jokes, "If our biggest problem is that we need more ponies, then life is pretty good."

The Indian Valley Carriage Company is on the southern edge of Novato. Sello offers insured and professional carriage service to Marin, Sonoma, and all of northern California. The horse-drawn rides include a black and maroon formal carriage called a *vis-a-vis*, so called because the riders sit face to face. Clients can also choose the fringe-roofed green surrey, which is less formal. The surrey has a cover, and all the seats face forward, offering a great view of the horses. Finally, Gary has a Connestoga wagon for large groups. The wagon has canvas sides which roll up in good weather, but can be lowered during cold, wind, or rain. When rolled down, the sides have plastic windows, so passengers can enjoy the view.

Sello loves to describe the joy that working with Bo and Honey has brought him. One bride told him that her wedding was "a dream come true." The team regularly pulls the big wagon to the Halleck Creek Riding Club, which serves kids who are physically disabled. "One father told me this was the only thing his kid ever wanted to do over again. I told him if he and his boy ever felt like going for a ride, call me." Gary, Bo, and Honey have participated in the Twin Cities Fourth of July Parade and Ross Centennial celebration. They performed in a Mountain Play production of "Oklahoma," and onstage at the San Francisco Opera's "Tannhauser." Mostly, Gary, Honey, and Bo share a life driving customers on the back roads of Novato, which he calls "the Oklahoma of Marin County." Neighbors speak positively of Sello's business saying that it conveys a perspective of life in Indian Valley with a slower pace, an opportunity to see the beauty of the hills, trees, horses, and chickens that harkens back to the Indian Valley of an earlier time. Gary says his business continues to be gratifying. "People don't take a wagon ride unless they're in a good mood. I have fun every day."

If you are interested in a carriage ride, Indian Valley offers summer evening and moonlight rides, weddings, holiday light tours, private and birthday parties, parades, and touring rides. If you have an idea that isn't listed here, pitch it to Honey, Bo, and Gary,



Great for special events

—they'll probably be game. Gift certificates are also available. Check it all out at [www.indianvalleycarriage.com](http://www.indianvalleycarriage.com), or by calling 415-309-8618.

Whichever service you choose, Bo and Honey provide a safe, smooth, relaxing ride. The peace of mind, clippety clop, and magical jingle-jangle are thrown in for free.

*JoDean Nicolette (Equus Hall of Fame 2011) is a family physician and editor of the Horse Journal. She is an avid trail rider, and president of the Mounted Assistance Unit for the California State Parks, Diablo Vista District. JoDean has three horses—Jimmie, Chance, and Bear. To contact JoDean about writing for the Horse Journal, email her at [editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).*

## The Vet's Office

Column editor Michelle Beko, DVM

# Fitness and Exercise Physiology

Any horse will be able to do his job better and have a lessened risk of injury if he is fit for his intended use. Training programs should teach the horse how to respond to the rider's cues and how to coordinate his movements. Appropriate conditioning prepares the horse's cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems for the type of exercise that will be expected. Let's discuss some basic information about exercise physiology and its implications for our working, sport, and pleasure horses.

### **Energy metabolism**

Horses' diets provide them with the energy they need to maintain their body temperature and provide fuel for basic bodily functions as well as exercise. Carbohydrates are primarily converted to glycogen and stored in the muscles and liver. Fat is stored elsewhere and transported to muscles as needed to burn for fuel. Carbohydrates and fat are fuel to muscles as gasoline is to a car.

This fuel can be burned aerobically or anaerobically, that is with or without oxygen. Aerobic metabolism is much more efficient. It provides the muscles with up to thirteen times more energy per carbohydrate molecule than anaerobic metabolism does. It also produces less waste (heat, lactic acid) than anaerobic metabolism. Heat is a byproduct of muscles burning the fuel they need to contract, just as car engines generate heat when they convert gas to mechanical energy. Anaerobic metabolism leads to fatigue much more quickly than aerobic metabolism. A horse will become fatigued when the carbohydrates stored in his muscles becomes depleted or when excessive lactate builds up in his muscles.

In general, aerobic metabolism is the primary form of energy metabolism for lower intensity, longer duration forms of exercise such as endurance riding. Short, high intensity exercise such as racing, Roping, and Barrel Racing rely primarily on anaerobic metabolism. Most other disciplines horses use a baseline of aerobic metabolism with intermittent short bursts of anaerobic metabolism to give them the extra energy needed.

### **Muscle types**

Every muscle is composed of many muscle cells. There are three types of muscle cells. Type 1 are slow twitch muscles which contract slowly and have a lot of enzymes for aerobic metabolism. They are best for long duration low intensity work. Type 2b are fast twitch cells which contract quickly, primarily have enzymes for anaerobic metabolism along with larger stores of carbohydrates and are best for quick bursts of speed or power. Type 2a are intermediate. They are fast twitch but can do either anaerobic or aerobic metabolism. These are the most responsive to conditioning.

Different breeds of horses have differing proportions of each type of muscle cell. Quarter Horses have the most type 2b and the least type 1. Arabians have the most type 1 and the least type 2b. This difference at least partially explains why Arabs make the best endurance horses and Quarter Horses make the best Barrel Racers.

### **Response to conditioning**

Different tissues respond to conditioning at different rates. The cardiovascular system (heart, blood, and blood vessels) responds relatively quickly in about three-to four months. New capillaries (the smallest blood vessels) grow into muscles allowing greater capacity for aerobic metabolism due to better oxygen delivery. Also at given intensity of exercise the horse's heart rate will be

lower than it was before she was fit.

Muscles also respond fairly quickly to conditioning. In as little as a few months muscles can become larger and stronger. They can increase the enzymes that are needed for energy metabolism, acquiring more that can use fat. Burning more fat spares carbohydrates stored in the muscles thus delaying one of the triggers of fatigue. Conditioning can also increase the levels of carbohydrates and fat stored within muscles.

Bones, tendons, and ligaments respond much more slowly to conditioning requiring many months to become stronger. This fact is especially important to remember in young horses. Repeated stress on these tissues during exercise leads to minor damage which is then repaired during rest. As this happens over and over the end result is stronger tissue. If the horse does not have enough rest time to repair the bone, tendon, or ligament however, the end result could be injury. If the exercise isn't enough to cause minor damage no strengthening will occur.

The respiratory system does not change much with conditioning.

### **Conditioning programs**

A horse's response to conditioning depends on the speed (intensity), duration, and frequency of exercise. Most unfit horses should start out with short duration low speed work a few times a week. The duration, intensity, and frequency can be gradually increased. Eventually the conditioning program should be tailored to the specific work the horse will be doing.

Aerobic conditioning uses progressively longer duration of low to moderate intensity work to increase the horse's endurance. There is not a way to condition a horse to improve her ability to use anaerobic metabolism. Interval training (fast exercise, rest, repeat) can be used to strengthen the muscles and adapt type 2a muscle cells to more high intensity work. This is a good way to condition horses for sprinting events such as Barrel Racing or Roping. The many disciplines (Eventing, Show Jumping, Cutting, Reining, etc.) that rely on a baseline of aerobic metabolism with bursts of anaerobic energy use (to get over a jump, sprint in a Reining pattern, etc.) can benefit from a conditioning practice called speed play. That is interspersing short bouts of more intense work amid moderate intensity exercise. One example would be cantering with short stretches of galloping now and then.

### **Warm up/cool down**

Regardless of your horse's fitness level, he will always benefit from a good warm up. Five to fifteen minutes of low intensity exercise starting with walking is essential. This allows his cardiovascular system to shunt blood away from the intestinal tract and other organs and dramatically increase the blood flow to muscles. It allows the heart rate and respiratory rate to increase for better oxygen delivery. It also raises the temperature in her muscles which lets them contract with greater power and become more compliant and therefore less prone to injury.

Walking or light trotting for ten minutes after intensive exercise can speed his recovery by burning some of the lactate that has accumulated in their muscles.

For more specific recommendations on conditioning for specific disciplines refer to Conditioning Sport Horses by Hilary Clayton (1991: Sport Horse Publications).





## Editor's Feature

# Horsepower: Modern Mounted Units

Written by JoDean Nicolette

The twentieth century and the automobile brought a close to most use of horses for transportation and uniformed services. Horses (and mules), however, continue to serve in important circumstances and for specific purposes including ceremony, and in remote areas where travel over terrain is prohibitive to vehicles. This article discusses the use of horses and mules as part of service units in the twenty-first century.

### The military

The US Cavalry used its last riding horses in the 1940s and its last pack animals in the 1950s. But the military still uses horses for ceremonial purposes including award proceedings and funerals. Recently, the use of horses and mules has had resurgence, particularly in rugged parts of the world, where vehicles are not practical. The most well-documented use of mules and horses has been in the mountains of Afghanistan beginning in about 2001. Marines rode horses and used pack mules for supplies. In addition mules are now part of a new medical evacuation program for movement of critically injured personnel from mountainous areas. Mules are particularly suitable because of their endurance, and their special trainability. They can be trained to assume a "low crawl" position in response to gunfire, and to return to a rallying point in the case of ambush. The equine program has been so successful that it led to the publication of a new Field Manual ("Special Forces Use of Pack Animals," 2004) and the establishment of a formal pack animal training courses at the Marine Corp Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Ca, and also at Fort Bragg, NC.

### Mounted police

Equestrian police patrols still exist in dozens of US cities. Locally, the San Francisco Mounted Patrol, founded in 1872 and the second oldest in the country, still employs horses for a variety of duties. Besides ceremony, the horses are used to patrol areas such as Golden Gate Park, and beaches, where the vehicles can't go, and also for crowd control. The horses work well with crowds because they can be imposing, but not threatening. During one of the initial and largest protests against the Iraq war, the mounted patrol unit was used to help officers who were being backed in and surrounded by protesters. Eleven horses rode in and parted the sea of protesters without hitting, stepping on, or even touching a single person. Currently, San Francisco has thirteen geldings including Clydesdale mixes, Quarter Horses, and Tennessee Walkers. Equine police candidates require certain personality traits. Being calm, curious, and affectionate with people is a must. But always following strict orders and going through intense noise desensitization training is even more important before a horse can take on the noisy and unpredictable streets of San Francisco. Human officers report that the mounted section is desirable, and the waiting list is long. Benefits include interaction with the animals, duty in the parks, and goodwill. Apparently when on horseback, citizens



The local MAU helps out during a state park fire

Photo: Nadine Lavell

respond to officers with a smile and cheery attitude, often just walking up to say hello, something that never happens when patrolling in a vehicle.

### Wilderness units

Traditionally horses have been a mainstay of patrol in state and national parks. For many years Annadel State Park had a horse on duty for ranger use. The first "patrol horse" at Annadel was an Appaloosa named Spot. While the state parks have largely made the transition to mechanized patrol and transportation (including ATVs), many national parks have kept patrol and guided rides as part

of their services. Yellowstone National Park has seventy-five horses on staff who transport rangers and their gear all over the vast terrain (Check out the Ranger Heritage Program-Adopt a Horse at [www.ynpf.org](http://www.ynpf.org)). Other national parks actively using horses for patrol include Big Bend and Rock Creek National Parks. Many wilderness areas also have trained Search and Rescue (SAR) units which can respond to emergencies such as lost visitors, or medical situations requiring evacuation. Besides travel over difficult terrain, riders on horseback can provide emergency stabilization, transport of injured parties, or scout out sites for helicopter landing. The Marin Posse performs SAR.

In Sonoma County, our state and regional parks have volunteer horseback patrol units who serve in a variety of roles. The state parks Mounted Assistance Unit (MAU) has seventy-five equestrian (and fifteen cyclist) members. The riders serve Annadel, Jack London, and Sugarloaf Ridge State Parks. Primarily the riders provide education to visitors regarding natural and cultural history, and park rules regulations. They offer assistance to lost visitors. Riders also activate ranger and emergency services for urgent or emergent conditions such as fire, injury and illness, or illegal activities. During emergencies such as wildfires, riders in the park may position themselves to direct visitors to the quickest, safest way out of the park and to safety. Most recently, the MAU has participated in creating and supporting contract agreements to keep our local state parks open. For more information about the California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit visit us on Facebook.

Horses and mules still play an active working role in many organized service units in the United States. They are particularly helpful over terrain prohibitive to motorized vehicles. Most horseback units have discovered that the public responds in a positive manner to uniformed riders. Of course avid equestrians find this as no surprise.

*JoDean Nicolette (Equus Hall of Fame 2011) is a family physician and editor of the Horse Journal. She is an avid trail rider, and president of the Mounted Assistance Unit for the California State Parks, Diablo Vista District. JoDean has three horses—Jimmie, Chance, and Bear. To contact JoDean about writing for the Horse Journal, email her at [editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).*

*Readers Write*

# Troubled Horses: The Fine Line Between Too Much and Not Enough

Written by Chris Ellsworth

In my life with horses I've worked with many who were bothered or unsure around people and a few who were truly troubled. It's been these latter horses who have really opened my eyes to how much fear and apprehension many horses have to live with. Troubled horses have also shown me how incredibly resilient and forgiving our equine friends can be.

Working with a troubled horse, especially one that has been abused or traumatized in some way, presents a far greater challenge than working with a more typical horse; the line between doing too much in an effort to help and not doing enough is razor thin. Ask too much of a troubled horse and you may push him right over the edge. Ask too little and you risk having him withdraw into a shell from which it becomes ever more difficult to return. And, as if that weren't enough of a challenge, you may have to stick with something for a long time before you begin to see any tangible results. If you're prone to self-doubts this can sure bring them on. To work with a troubled horse requires patience—lots of it—and a willingness to take a certain amount of rejection without seeing it as a personal affront. For these reasons and because troubled horses are often sudden and extreme in their reactions it is better

*Chris and Pancakes*

to enlist the help of someone who is experienced in working with them than to find yourself overwhelmed and possibly hurt when going it alone.

Over the years I've found that it is critical to match the amount of exposure to a particular stimulus to the ability of a troubled horse to stay engaged with it. In other words don't over expose a really fearful horse or you may convince him he was right to be afraid. It is better to be satisfied with a small success than to undo a lot of progress by asking for more than you

horse can give. So be alert for signs that your horse is reaching his limit, such as a sudden stiffening in his posture or a momentary cessation of breathing. And a really troubled horse will often stop and look as if he's turned to stone—right before he blows up. There may not be a lot of time for you to decide when he's had enough, either, so be ready in an instant to quit while you're ahead.

I've found that planning ahead for how much progress I'm going to make in a given session is usually a bad idea. Truly troubled horses are under enough pressure as it is and deadlines aren't helpful. I'd rather take what a horse can give me. Some days all he's got to give is less than the day before but I still try to act thankful that my troubled friend is giving me what he can. I look at days like these as chances to convince him that he can succeed when the going is a little tougher.

The other side of the line when working with a troubled horse is to not do enough. While it's true you won't over-expose a horse if you avoid working with him you won't be helping him either. He'll still be living with his fears even if we choose to avoid dealing with them. I believe we have a duty to make the lives of our horses at least better, since we can't make them perfect. Jumping out of your horse hide at every little thing is not a better option, nor is getting canned out because nobody can handle you. And I'm sure that most horses would tell you that being terrified of humans gets old pretty fast since they always seem to be lurking about. So if your horse has a problem, help him face it. Otherwise it's likely to grow and when it does come up later (and it will) he will be even less able to handle it.

In practical terms you can define the line between too much and not enough by looking for the amount of exposure that causes a horse to search for an answer and not just leave without one. Find that place where he is alert and aware and try not to go past it. Good luck!

*Chris Ellsworth has spent a lifetime working with horses and riders of all types and kinds, and helping both work through their troubles. Riding with such notable horseman as Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt helped him formulate his approach to horsemanship, and he has since branched out to develop methods that are, "more mental and less spectacular every day." He will be conducting clinics in La Honda, CA on October 12-14, and Healdsburg, CA on October 20-21. Contact Sylvie Anacker @ (415) 309-0162 for more information or visit Chris' website at [www.chearthorses.com](http://www.chearthorses.com).*

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## Readers Write

## Woodside Horse Trials: The New Work

Written by Sade Cain



Photo: Marcie Lewis

Sade and Zeloso at the Woodside Cross Country finish

This country and most of the world was built on work done by horses. None of us should ever take for granted the services they have provided. They provided transportation for people and goods, farm work, and work herding cattle, among other things. They were so important, that the legal penalty in the US for stealing a horse was death. Although most of us don't need horses now for our daily living, we "work" with them in other ways. My horse is a performance horse. His work is in partnership with me in Three Day Eventing. His "pay" is love, board, and care, and the satisfaction I know he feels when we complete a show successfully together. In May, Zeloso, my eight year old Lusitano gelding, and I travelled to Woodside on "a job." I thought I would write about that.

The crisp air was unusual for May in Woodside. Everyone had packed for summer, including light sheets and coolers for the horses. As I walked Zeloso around, we thought about our goals for this year's journey: to grow competitively, spiritually, and effectively. We had three days, five minutes or less each day, to demonstrate our more than six months (and lifetime!) of preparation.

Day one-Dressage: I woke from a restless night of trying to stay warm, and immediately began my visualization of a successful ride. I planned to sit the trot for my test which was a physical and mental challenge for Zeloso and I. My mental preparation helped. We began on the centerline, and performed. I banished thoughts like, "Straight? The right energy?" and just gave myself over to the movement. My mind was at ease, and we moved through all the exercises well. We ended on G halt salute. Zeloso was pleased with himself and strutted a bit more than usual. The judge sees only a snap shot of your riding, and they might like it, but if they don't, your job is to learn from every experience. All Eventers know to happily tolerate the Dressage until we can continue on to the next days of adrenaline-pounding, thrill-seeking jumping!

Day two-Stadium Jumping: Let the fashion show begin! Stadium surpasses the attire for Dressage... But it's the uniform for the job.

I people watch in my down time. Each person is unique in his/her style. Some are casual, and others dressed as if the Olympic judges themselves were watching...from the last minute boot shine, to the polishing of the designer saddle's nameplate. I carry anxiety about Stadium Jumping experiences, and it creates what I call the "zig and zag." Zeloso, a normally calm, relaxed horse, reads me and becomes an alert, overwhelmed animal. In the past I have felt that my goal was to just hang on, and steer towards the jumps! Working with Zeloso has changed my way of reacting and communicating. I learned to calm myself so that we wouldn't feed into each other's behavior. My goal for this round was rhythm, control, and straightness. I established my rhythm with the first stride into the arena. After surviving the warm up arena, with horses and riders going in all different directions and crashing into things, how could this moment of solitude in front of spectators be a challenge? I pictured walking the course with my trainer in the morning,

and just retraced the path. For once I was able to breathe between all eight jumps. I shared my calm. Zeloso literally soared... over all the jumps. His wild long hair caught the wind as we rode. Before I knew it, the jumps were behind us. We hit one rail, for a few faults, but no time penalties. We had survived Stadium!

Day three-Cross Country: This is the day everyone waits for. Cross Country, is five minutes of freedom, speed, agility, technique, and timing all in one. You're silent waiting at the start box because you're trying to hold back a possible regurgitation of breakfast. But after the first fence I settled into a stride, and Zeloso instantly accepted the pace. He was strong and he used his haunches to balance and collect for each jump. While on course, Zeloso and I communicate. Mostly, I say "Zeloso, stop spooking, we are following the novice path, not the advanced enormous fences!" Or Zeloso tells me, "Oh look, a sign, oops we can't jump our fence!" It's magic out there. The light pounding of his hoofs, as they strike at 400 meters per minute, the exciting sounds of the announcer saying your name, and the happiness we feel as our team cheers us on from the view points. Our joy at the completion is bitter-sweet, because that means it's already over.

We finished our "job" after three days, and headed home. Of course the "work" started months and years before that. As the weekend closed, I thought over how new and old friends meet and reconnect. It was so much more than "work" to be a member of such a special horse show family.

*Sade Cain, a SRJC graduate, completed her degree in Equine Science in 2009. Sade is studying more about riders with disabilities, and is a therapeutic riding instructor under the guidance and mentorship of Maxine Freitas at Equi-Ed, located in Calistoga. In her spare time, when not competing and teaching, you can find Sade relaxing with friends and horses on the beach or in the local parks.*





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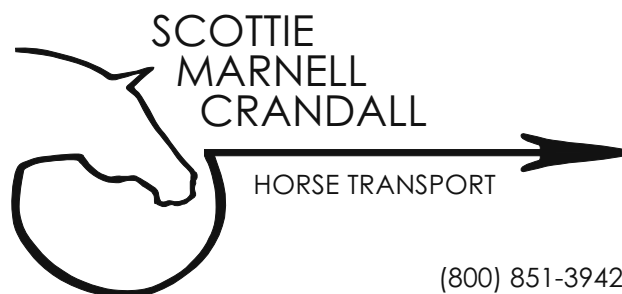
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## From the Horse's Mouth



*Saralee Kunde on Cotton Rosser's Megan at the sheep drive*

### **The Santa Rosa Sheep Drive**

Farmer's Day at the Sonoma County Fair began with a pancake breakfast in Courthouse Square, and a sheep drive through downtown Santa Rosa. Besides riders, experienced herding dogs, and a brass band accompanied the sheep from the corner of Fourth and Mendocino to the Fairgrounds. Despite a couple of breakaway ewes and two brief near-stampedes, six dozen black-and-white-faced sheep made it to their destination. The seventy-two sheep were a mix of Hampshire and Dorset. Watchful border collies from the Redwood Empire Sheepdog Association were helpful in keeping wayward sheep in the pack, but a few scooted past the orange plastic netting and into the crowd. With help from spectators, the animals ended up back on track. One Bodega sheep farmer who helped organize the drive, was a little leery about it, knowing sheep are more at ease grazing on green hillsides than in a crowded asphalt jungle. "It's very unusual," he said. "But to bring agriculture to downtown Santa Rosa is a great opportunity. It's a way to highlight what sheep are doing in the county: lambs, wool, milk."



### **Horses and Riders Rescued**

Jenny Alphin, local equestrian, found herself a heroine for both horses and riders as two more horses were welcomed into Jenny's home for use at Hoofbeats Riding School. Hoofbeats Riding School, with support from community partners, pooled resources to transition both slaughter-bound horses into new life with a purpose. This brings the total to four horses Hoofbeats has adopted over the past year; three rescue horses from Sonoma Action For Equine Rescue (SAFER) and one from a financially-stressed owner. These once forgotten, neglected or even beaten horses now have a dozen or more loving hands brushing them, cleaning their stalls, and showing them how to trust people again. Jenny Alphin, a former preschool teacher, started Hoofbeats as

an extension of her classroom for children who could benefit from working with and around horses. She saw an immediate and positive result. Social anxiety lessened, sadness dissipated, stress was released, and even physical limitations decreased. SAFER rescued Wizard (a ten year old Quarter Horse cross), Dusty (a seventeen year old Quarter Horse cross), and Mocha (a five year old registered Quarter Horse), by outbidding the slaughter buyer at auction. Rascal, a nine year old registered Quarter Horse, was acquired from the owner that loved him dearly but just could not afford him anymore during this economic low. The owner desperately sought a loving home for him. All four horses now have a safe, permanent home and loving students at the Hoofbeats Riding School.



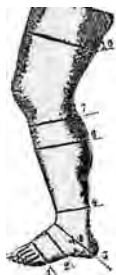
*Emily (left) and Erika win big at Pebble Beach*

### **Local Riders Win at Pebble Beach**

At the Pebble Beach Dressage Show in early July, Santa Rosa Equestrian Center's (SREC) young rider, Emily Mueller, and Dressage trainer, Erika Jansson, gave their barn-mates something to be proud of. Seventeen year old Emily Mueller and her nineteen year old Oldenburg gelding, Heart and Sol (aka Sol), achieved high scores of 70.4 and 71.2, and won all four of their First Level classes. They brought home the Jr/YR Perpetual High Point Trophy as well as a Champion Ribbon for Jr/YR First Level. Trainer Erika Jansson (see article on Erika's Cavaletti Clinics in Spring 2012 issue of the Horse Journal) on Verso De Retiro (aka Verso), a ten year old Lusitano breeding stallion owned by Tracy Underwood and Wes Leckner, also performed remarkably well. The pair achieved scores in the 70s, including a 72%, in a challenging Fourth Level test. Erika also showed a six year old Oldenburg mare, Lady Chalk Hill (aka Ladybug), owned by Rickey Standcliff of Santa Rosa Equestrian Center. Pebble Beach was Lady Chalk Hill's first "away show," and one of her early trailering experiences. The pair competed at Training Level as well as First Level, earning admirable scores of 71.6 and 69, respectively. Needless to say, the outing was a fun and memorable success for all involved.



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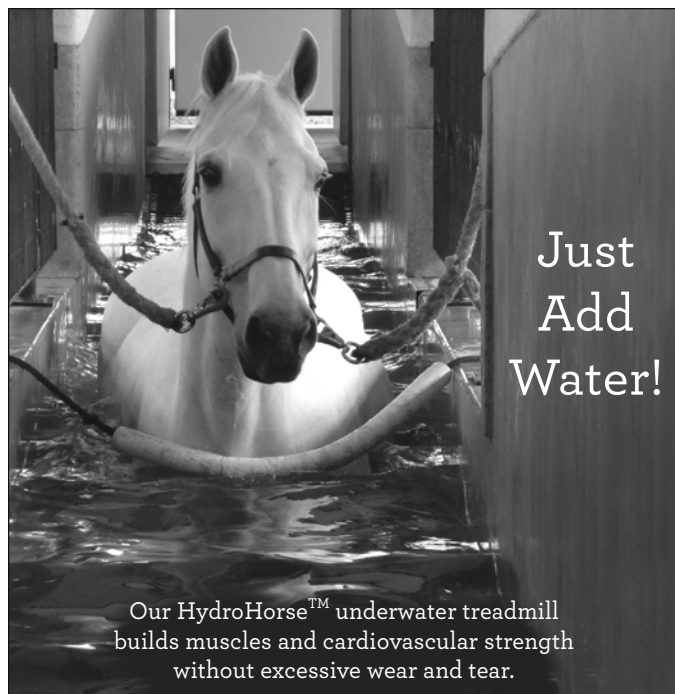
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