



SOUNDS OF STIRRUPS 'N STRIDES **Quarterly Newsletter January 2008** **Volume 1 Issue 2**

A Chat with Director Betty Gray

2007 brought many changes for us, the biggest of which was the establishment of a therapeutic riding center at my farm, Hi-Time in Citra. Stirrups 'n Strides Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. officially opened in January of 2007 with 5 students. As we begin 2008, just one year later, I am happy to report we have 35 students enrolled at our center.

We also continue to ride a class of exceptional students from Belleview High school twice a month. Fifteen students ride the school bus and come to the farm and spend 3 or 4 hours with us. Nine of the students are learning to ride. The other six participate in a work/study program cleaning stalls, building fences and grooming horses. The parents, teachers and the instructors are thrilled with the progress of each and every student.

The Stirrups 'n Strides Christmas Party featured good food and lots of fun. Seventy-five plus students, parents and volunteers all joined in to welcome a visit from Santa Claus. While the focus was on Santa most of us couldn't take our eyes off of the amazing magic provided by Mike Carnevale.

Six of our riders competed in 2007 at the Marion Saddle Club circuit shows. Year end awards are as follows: Independent Walk/Trot Champion was won by Kathy Gray with Kim DiPiazza as the Reserve Champion. Third place was won by Megan Cyr. Our riders also did very well in the assisted walk/trot class with Krista Koch walking off with the Championship; Cheryl Burrell was Reserve Champion and third went to Kathleen Van Rider. We will be participating this year as well and will begin in April with the first show.

Speaking of competitions....the Area Special Olympic Games will be in late March or April and the Special Olympic State Competition will be May 30th and 31st in Tampa. Please sign up if you are interested in participating in Special Olympics this year.

I am very pleased to tell you that Deborah Weber has sponsored Bourbon one of our horses, the Quail Roost Foundation gave us a very nice grant, Linda and Doug Smith are giving our horse's chiropractic care as well as providing natural supplements for their care and Tracy Shumer presented us with a nice gift certificate to The Tack Shack for Christmas. Heart felt thanks to each of you.

We've come a long way in just one year and I thank each and every one of you for your help and dedication to the establishment of this new therapeutic riding center. Classes resume on January 5th and once again I will invite you to put your foot in the "Stirrup" and "Stride" forth with us into a bright 2008!

Betty Gray

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 8th 2008 Session begins

Tuesday Classes: 8:30am; 10:30am

Wednesday Classes: 8:30am; 9am; 10:30am

Thursday Classes: Twice a month ESE Students from Belleview High school

Saturday Classes: 9am; 10:30am

Note: Lessons are offered in both riding and driving. The cost is \$25 a lesson. If you are interested in participating in one of the programs call 352-591-1042 or 352-427-3569 for more information.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Leaders.....Maintain an “in charge” attitude but be as gentle as possible.

Sidewalkers.....Refrain from talking to the horse handler or other sidewalkers during the lesson unless it concerns the rider or the horse’s behavior.

Groomers....Always clean your grooming tools after use.

HORSE SENSE

A new horse has come to live at Stirrups ‘n Strides his name is Billy. He is a registered quarter horse and has been professionally trained. He is particularly valuable to our program for our independent riders. Billy was donated to us by Carmen Mervin. This brings to eight the number of horses in the stable. Patches, Brigsy and Bourbon are sponsored but we still need sponsors for Puffy, Knickee, Brook, Stewart and Billy. The donation to sponsor a horse for a year is \$2000. For more information call 352-591-1042.

SALUTE TO SPONSORS

Recent new sponsors include Quail Roost Foundation: \$2,000; Deborah Weber: \$2,000; and Chiropractors Linda and Doug Smith: chiropractic work on the horses as well as \$4,000 worth of natural horse supplements. We are most grateful and issue a huge **THANK YOU!** We continue to need the assistance of many more sponsors. We have a whole page of items needed. We call it our “wish list”. If you would like to have a copy and know more about our needs please give us a call. Right now our most needed items include: Fly Spray, Show Sheen, Body Clippers, Small Clippers, Stall Ties, Horse Shampoo and Tack Cleaning Supplies. If you can do more we also need a riding lawn mower, tractor with mower, a weed eater and a ¾ ton truck and horse trailer.

RIDERS SHINE IN KANSAS CITY

The United Professional Horseman's Assoc. (UPHA) holds an exceptional challenge cup each year for challenged riders with either a mental or physical disability. The competition is open to all independent English walk and trot equitation riders 12 years of age and over. Riders must qualify at a local horse show to be able to compete in the National Championship.

Stirrups 'N Strides made the trip to the Kansas finals in November with two very excited riders. Megan Cyr of Anthony and Krista Koch of Ocala worked hard all summer to improve their riding skills and the hard work paid off. Megan won the overall Reserve Grand Championship and Krista won Grand Champion for the physically disabled and 3rd overall. It was their first time in national competition and they did us all proud. Congratulations!

Stirrups 'N Strides would like to encourage other therapeutic riding programs in Florida to participate in the Exceptional challenge Cup next year. There are so few opportunities for people with disabilities to perform at the national level and demonstrate their talent, determination and abilities. The Exceptional Challenge Cup provides a wonderful opportunity for riders to work toward their goals. If you would like more information contact Betty Gray at 352-427-3569 or e-mail at grayhitime@windstream.net.

VALUED VOLUNTEERS

We always need to take a moment to praise the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. A therapeutic riding program can only exist with wonderful people who are willing to walk beside a child, lead or groom a horse, pick up a paint brush or hammer, input data into a computer or sponsor a student scholarship or horse. We salute each and every one of you! We need more Volunteers. There are a variety of opportunities. Right now our most critical needs are people with computer skills to help in the office; and folks that can help us build a fence or two. We also need sidewalkers and leaders for our Saturday classes. Come for a visit or give us a call at 352-591-1042.

FUTURE EVENTS

The Challenge Cup Show is January 26th. It will be held this year at Fannin Hill Farms North of Brooksville on Highway 50 off I-75. It is open to all challenged riders for region 5. Riders come from all over Florida and from Georgia. Stirrups 'n Strides and Bakas Equestrian Center of Tampa are co-hosts for this competition. Volunteers and Sponsors are needed to make this event possible. Please check the enclosed sponsor sheet for more information.

FUTURE EVENTS (continued)

January 19th is the Poker Ride to benefit Stirrups 'n Strides sponsored by Sun Country Trail Blazers. Riders up at 9AM at the Shangri-LA Trail Head, 12788 SW 69th Court, in Ocala. The cost is \$10 a hand and the winner takes half the proceeds. For more information contact Joyce Tyson 352-236-5658.

HOW TO REACH US

Stirrups 'n Strides is located on Hi-Time farm in Citra. It is midway between Ocala and Gainesville just 3 miles East of I-75 (exit 368) or 1 mile East of Hwy 441 on CR 318. Once you are on 318 look for the Ocala Jai Alai . Stirrups 'n Strides is about a half mile past the Jai Lai on the right. The actual address is: 4246 West Highway 318, Citra, FL 32113. You can call us at 352-591-1042 or 352-427-3569.