

SOUNDS OF STIRRUPS 'N STRIDES

Quarterly Newsletter

March 2011

Volume 3 Issue #12

A Chat with Betty Gray

Happy Spring to everyone! Since we only put our newsletter out quarterly, I must begin by reminiscing about Christmas 2010. The year end party was a big success with nearly 200 people attending. The highlight as always was Santa Claus in person with a gift for everyone. I also wanted to thank all of you for being so kind to our horses. People selected a horse from the Christmas Gift Tree and granted the particular horse's need. So we were blessed with fly masks, halters, fly spray, treats, barn tools, worm medicine and lead ropes.

Early in January, Kathy Gray and Marianne Hughes performed a drill team at the Carriage Festival in Weirsdale, and it was a huge hit. It was quite a challenge for both of them, since Marianne is blind and Kathy doesn't see anything to the left, but with Marianne riding Barney and Kathy on Tanner they did a fantastic job with beepers placed in the corners of the ring and by whistle signals. I was extremely proud of them, their hard work and a lot of practice and patience paid off.

The seven day cruise in January was attended by 21 Stirrups 'n Strides family and friends. We raised some money and all had a lovely time on the "Freedom of the Seas" touring the Bahamas, St. Thomas and St. Maarten.

In January we also began giving short volunteer refresher courses to our volunteers after class. We continued this in February. It has worked so well, we will continue doing it every couple of months.

As you know, I give many presentations to various groups and clubs to tell them about the benefits of therapeutic riding. This also is a chance to raise funds to assist in our important mission. We recently have purchased a laser projector to assist with these presentations. We are always eager to tell our story so if you belong to a club or know of a club that might be interested in learning about therapeutic riding please let us know.

The Challenge Show in February had 77 riders and 300 family members participating. The weather was a bit chilly in the morning but the afternoon was delightful. Fifty Volunteers helped us stage the event which was hosted by Stirrups 'n Strides & Bakas Equestrian Center. Seven programs participated from around Florida and as far away as Georgia. A special thank you to Jim Olson and Stacey Spence who spent a long day judging all the classes.

We have had several groups of volunteers that have helped us this spring. I am most grateful to each and every person who so unselfishly gave of their time and money. You will read more about them elsewhere in the newsletter but I'd like to close by telling you about a very special group of boy scouts. The Boy Scout Troop 331 whom is sponsored by We Who Care Of Marion County for special needs students came to us to earn their Horse Badges. They had a chance to learn all about horses, to groom, tact and ride them. Jody Schaible & Billy Bishop, our Farrier's, even came to show them all about shoeing a horse. In March I attended their awards banquet. Each Boy Scout said obtaining their horse badge was the best one of all. A big surprise of the evening was a check for \$250 presented to Stirrups 'n Strides!

Hey everyone, check out our web-site. We have made some changes & even have a YouTube video on the home page. Our address is: www.stirrupsnstrides.com. Thanks go out to our web master Susan Sisti for all the changes.

Betty Gray

DONATION BOXES

We are still looking for high traffic places to put our donation boxes. If you know of a place, that you would be willing to service (picking up the money from time to time) please let us know. We will give you all the information you need. You would be surprised to learn how much we can make when people drop their change in after they have paid a bill.

FUND RAISERS FLOURISH

Thanks to all of you we have had quite a few successful fund raisers during this last quarter. The Quail Roost Foundation presented us with a check as did the Zigfield Girls of South Florida. We also, received a Grant from the Endowment Fund which is apart of United Way. Another nice surprise came when we learned we had been chosen by the Christopher & Dana Reeves Foundation for a Grant. Some of these funds have made it possible for us to purchase much needed therapeutic equipment for the arena & horses. We also have a new portable ramp on its way which can be taken to horseshows to make it easier to mount our riders.

Spruce Creek Preserve, compliments of the Republican Club hosted a spaghetti dinner for us. There was great food, great entertainment. One hundred sixty folks attended and helped us raise \$1015.

The Ocala Rotary Club participated in the United Way Day of Caring by coming to Stirrups 'n Strides and helping us put up a fence along our pasture. They also donated some of the materials to make this possible.

The Ocala West United Methodist Church had 15 to 18 volunteers that came each day for a week to build a new arena for us. They also painted the fences, fixed stalls, and trimmed the trees. This is the church's annual mission trip and we were delighted to be the recipients of their generosity. They not only worked but donated materials and money to complete the jobs. They are our earthly angels.

The Central Christian Church Youth Group came and spent a day pulling weeds and tidying up one of our pastures.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, AND THANK YOU.

ABOUT OUR HORSES

Our dear Ivy has found another home. We all loved Ivy but he was not happy doing this type of work. He has headed to a wonderful home in Pompano Beach. He will spend his days just a few blocks from the beach. Ivy will be used for trail riding which he dearly loves. We have a new horse which is quickly making a place for herself. Her name is Goldie. Goldie is a 15 year old palomino Quarter Horse and she is becoming a favorite for many of the volunteers and riders.

SPECIAL OLYMPIC AREA GAMES APRIL 2nd

We had 17 students and six horses that attended Area Games on Saturday April 2nd. The Area games were hosted by MTRA in Ocala. The weather was perfect & our riders did extremely well. State Special Olympics will be held May 20th and 21st in Tampa. We are only allotted so many slots. We will choose those to go by drawing names from the Blue Ribbon winners from the Area Games as soon as we receive our allotment. A big thank you goes out to MTRA for hosting the Games.

A SALUTE TO A SPECIAL VOLUNTEER

Betty Boyle is her name, helping is her game! Betty "B" has worked at Betty Gray's side for over ten years. Currently you will see her on Wednesdays grooming and tacking horses, side walking with our clients and

generally doing what needs to be done. Betty's love of horses began when she was a little girl and rode a plow horse on her granddad's farm. She still rides today and was hard pressed to name a favorite horse at Stirrups 'n Strides. She loves them all. At one time in her career she had Baskchkir Curly horses. She first heard about them in an article in Mother Nature Magazine. These unusual horses were developed in Utah. They are known for being very gentle and easy to train. They have a hoof which is more oval shaped than the usual and as their name suggests very curly hair. They were originally bred in Mongolia to withstand the blizzards of the northwest.

After moving to Palm Cay she missed being around horses until one day she saw a notice on the bulletin board asking for volunteers for therapeutic riding. The next 10 and half years just flew by as Betty learned to love our horses and our clients. When asked what she liked best about Stirrups 'n Strides she quickly replied, "The students, their families, the other volunteers, and the horses. I love them all."

Betty pointed out that one of the best things about volunteering is not what you do for others but rather the joy you receive from working with the children and horses. "What more could you ask for...wonderful people...wonderful horses...and pure joy!"

Betty it is people like you who are the backbone of Stirrups 'n Strides....WE SALUTE YOU!

MARION COUNTY FARM TOURS VISIT STIRRUPS 'N STRIDES

The Harvest Village Farm Tours will be in McIntosh on April 23rd. Stirrups 'n Strides will have a booth at the fair. People will be able to sign up and come to Stirrups 'n Strides to see our facilities and learn about therapeutic riding. So if you are up this way on the 23rd you might like to go to Harvest Village, it sounds like a lot of fun, there will be other farms on the tour as well. Harvest Village is just North of McIntosh right on Hwy 441.

NEW PORTABLE RAMP ON ITS WAY

Thanks to a grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation we have been able to purchase a portable ramp. We not only will be able to use this on the farm but be able to take it with us to competitions to make mounting and dismounting horses much easier for our riders. This wonderful grant also has assisted us in purchasing other special equipment as well as adding to our scholarship fund.

MAIN FUND RAISER NEEDS A NAME!

Our main fund raiser for 2011 will be a Country Ho-Down and Chinese Auction. This will replace From Seats to Saddles for this year. It will be held Sunday evening, November 6th at the Paddock Mall. We will have a buffet dinner for 200 people, country western entertainment and square dancing demonstrations. Our own Catherine Sears will be performing as one of our country singers. Catherine has just put out her first CD which we have all been enjoying. Each person will receive a couple of tickets for the Chinese Auction with their \$35 dinner ticket. They will be able to purchase more tickets to try & win their favorite basket. There will be lots of themed baskets. The participants can place one or all of their raffle tickets in the box by the basket they would like to win. We need each of you to start thinking about preparing a basket for the event, we are hoping that our volunteers & riders families will help by putting together a special basket. It must be worth at least \$25. For instance you might put together a beach basket containing everything you would need for the beach such as: sun block, beach towels, beach toys, books, etc. Other ideas might be wine & cheese, handyman, kitchen, bakers, golf or baby basket. Let your imagination be your guide. As you begin to think about it you'll come up with many ideas. We also would like some higher end items such as a weekend at the beach getaway. If you know anyone who might have a timeshare or own a condo that they might donate for a few days for our auction, please let us know. If you begin working on it now you can pick up items as you see them over the next few months.

Right now however, we need your help in selecting a name for the event. We would like it to be as catchy as From Seats to Saddles. Hand your suggestions in to Betty or a Board Member. If your name is chosen for our fundraiser you will receive a Stirrups 'n Strides shirt of your choice. We need the name as soon as possible so we can begin to get posters made and publicity planned.

QUESTION FOR JIM OLSON

Q: I own a well trained riding horse. What kind of equipment do I need to hook him up to a cart?

A: Whoa! Don't put the horse before the cart! (sorry about that) Seriously, the horse needs a lot of work before you put a cart behind him. It is best if you have a couple of people to help you and preferably a professional trainer. You begin by hooking the horse up to long lines and getting him used to having someone behind rather than on top of him. Have one person lead the horse and the other works the lines. You need a leader as the horse will have a tendency to circle.

Once he obeys the commands from behind you can add a whip touching the horse lightly on the side as you want it to turn to the left or right. The other person should walk beside the horse with a lariat tied to the saddle horn. This accustoms the horse to having something on the side.

Next step is to hook up a log so the horse gets used to dragging something behind him. Place two long sticks on the side through the stirrups to get the horse used to being constrained by the toggles.

Each of these steps is complicated and should be done more times than you feel necessary rather than less. When you finally harness the horse do not forget the blinders. The horse is apt to panic if it perceives the cart as chasing it. Continue to use long lines once the horse is connected to the cart. Again use a leader. Remember baby steps. An ill trained horse can not only injure you but the cart and itself as well.

When driving always keep an eye on what is in front of the horse so that it is not spooked by a branch or other foreign object. Our space here is limited therefore I once again urge you to get a professional trainer to help you and perhaps go to the library or go on line to get some books of instruction.

DATES OF INTEREST

- April 23rdFarm Tours
- May 1st Marion Saddle Club Show
- May 20th and 21stState Olympic Games Tampa
- June 3rd and 4thFamily Café Conference Orlando
- June 26thMarion Saddle Club Show

FINAL THOUGHT

The surest way to lose the best in life is to fail to recognize it when you already have it.
Anonymous