

SOUNDS OF STIRRUPS ‘N STRIDES

**Quarterly Newsletter Volume 1 Issue 1
September 2007**

A Chat with Director Betty Gray

Welcome to the first quarterly issue of “The Sounds of Stirrups ‘n Strides”! After leaving MTRA after almost a decade as Executive Director I decided to open another therapeutic riding center at my farm, Hi-Time, in Citra. We are conveniently located between Ocala and Gainesville on CR 318 just one mile east of Hwy 441. The official name is Stirrups ‘n Strides Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. We officially opened in January as a North American Riding for the Handicap (NARHA) member center.

It seems like a short time and yet we have accomplished so much. Our first big undertaking was to host the Region 5 NARHA Challenge show at Continental Acres Equine Resort in Weirsdale. We registered 45 riders and worked with a total of 52 volunteers. Riders came from all over Florida and Georgia. We are grateful to Gloria Austin for donating her facility for this wonderful show.

In February we hosted a promotional booth at the Gasperilla Charity Horse Show and Kathy Gray provided a demonstration of what therapeutic riding can and does accomplish. Then it was time for the Special Olympics Area Games. We took seven riders and took first place in all the classes we entered. Four riders joined in to participate at the Citrus Cup Regional Morgan Show, and three of them qualified to go to the American Royal National Championship in Kansas City in November. We are especially proud of Kathy Gray who took the Reserve High Point Championship in the open Dressage Division competing against able riders. In May we went to the Special Olympic State Games in Tampa. We took three riders and out of six classes entered we took 5 golds and one silver. So you can see we are bursting with pride over the accomplishments of our riders during our opening months.

In June we took a break from building, painting, mowing and grooming to just have fun. It was our “Fun Day”. This was so wonderful it will become an annual event. Riders, volunteers, instructors and parents enjoyed swimming, buggy rides and lots of silly games. Fifty-five folks joined in the event.

That brings us up to date except to say that during all of the start-up activities we managed to get our 501C-3 non-profit status and received a grant from FTOBA. We also have received wonderful assistance from other sponsors. See them listed on the sponsor page of our web-site. The fall session begins September 18th so we invite you to put your foot in the “Stirrup” and “Stride” forth with us into a bright future.

Betty Gray

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CLASS SCHEDULE

September 15th is Volunteer Orientation

September 18th Fall Session begins

Tuesday Classes: 8:30am; 9am; 10am; 4pm and 5pm

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

Saturday Classes: 9am and 10:30am

Thursdays, twice a month ESE Students from Belleview High school ride.

This is an alliance that Stirrups 'n Strides has with the classes for Exceptional Students in Belleview.

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.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Leaders.....Know your limitations. If you don't feel you can handle a particular horse, don't do it.

Sidewalkers.....Support a rider wearing a gait belt by holding the belt loop in one hand and steadying the leg at the ankle with the other hand.

Groomers.....Brush the horse's mane to the left or right side. Use caution as you get closer to the horse's head. Work out tangles beginning with the ends and working your way toward the base of the mane, use show sheen to take out the tangles.

Riders.....If you don't understand an instruction or are uncomfortable with a procedure tell your sidewalker or instructor and ask for further help.

HORSE SENSE

You can sponsor a horse for an entire year for \$2,000. Currently two of our horses at Stirrups 'n Strides have been sponsored. Patches is sponsored by the DiPiazza Family and Briggsy is sponsored by Treesa Drury. The following horses are all in need of sponsors: Lady, Puffy, Knickee, Bourbon, Brook, and Stewart. For more information on how you can get involved call 352-591-1042.

VALUED VOLUNTEERS

Stirrups ‘n Strides cannot survive without those who are willing to walk beside a child, lead or groom a horse, pick up a paint brush or hammer, sit down at a computer and input data, or donate funds to sponsor a student scholarship or horse. Perhaps you are not sure where you might fit in? We invite you to come for a visit, but beware you probably will get hooked and begin a most rewarding obsession—therapeutic riding!

There are a variety of volunteer opportunities. Currently we are in desperate need of office help. So if you know your way around a computer please give us a call. And of course we always need folks to help clean the stalls, groom the horses and serve as leaders or sidewalkers. Come see us or call 352-591-1042.

SALUTE TO SPONSORS

We wish to thank the folks who as soon as they learned of our new endeavor jumped right in to help. In future issues you will be learning about and hearing from many of these people. In this our first newsletter we wish to salute the following sponsors who are part of the Stirrups ‘n Strides family: OBS Feed and Supply; Seminole Feed Stores; Midwest Hay; Ocala Equine Hospital; Cardinal Hill Farm; Jody Schnaible, Farrier; A+ Tax and bookkeeping center and OBS Sales. Thank you one and all!

HOW TO REACH US

Stirrups ‘n Strides is located at 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 Jai Alai Fronton. Stirrups ‘n Strides is about a half mile past the Jai Alai on the right. The actual address is: 4246 West Highway 318, Citra, Florida 32113. You can find us on line at www.stirrupsnstrides.com. If you wish to send an e-mail write to grayhitime@windstream.net . You can call us at 352-591-1042 or 352-427-3569.