

Making Strides

April 2017

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A Word from Betty Gray, Executive Director



Show Time! **Special Olympics -** *Special Olympics Area 4 and State Championship Games*

The Special Olympics Area 4 Games hosted at Stirrups 'n Strides was a spectacular day for riders and we were honored to hold it at our facility! Seventy-five (75) riders'

participated and over 300 family members and spectators attended. The weather was perfect! The Stirrups 'n Strides volunteer team and staff prepared for days leading up to the event. Volunteers came out in great force the day of the event and these efforts paid off with glowing results! I am continually and enormously proud of what our volunteers accomplish.



It's also gratifying to see what happens when our community pulls together. Marion County Commissioner Zalak joined us to open the games. The North Marion Jr. ROTC helped with directing the flow of traffic and parking cars & horse trailers. They also provided the Color

Guard for opening ceremonies. The University of Florida Equestrian Club provided 42 volunteers to help with preparations the day before and during the event! The Masonic Friendship Lodge #53 provided and served burgers and dogs off the grill. With these efforts, donations and our bake sale, over \$1,000 was raised to help cover expenses! A special

lunchtime appearance by the Royal Horses and Rene' & GiGi Gasser, awed the crowds. Volunteer judges Chris Cook, B-C Foundation Station, & Jim Olson did such a great job and classes ran smoothly. The 28 Stirrups 'n Strides riders that competed in Special Olympics Area Games worked for months to meet their goals and participate on this special day. Because of this great team effort, the Special Olympics Area Games was truly a memorable day!

The outcomes paved the way at the Special Olympics State Equestrian Games held at Grand Oaks, Weirsdale. Stirrups 'n Strides had 13 qualifying riders compete and take 7 Gold, 9 Silver and 2 Bronze medals! The smiles on everyone's faces made all the hard work and preparation well worth it! We are so proud of our riders!

(**Ocala Star Banner** archives Feb. 11, 2017: Ocala.com/news "Riders have 'awesome' day of fun in Special Olympic Area Games".)

The Benefits of Show Competition

A lot of work goes into these shows and competitions and we need to remember the many benefits gained by our riders. Not only does it challenge them to set goals and dreams and strive to reach them, it broadens their horizons. By participating in community events and being part of a team they experience fellowship. Riders must focus, cope in different environments and learn good sportsmanship. As a result, they gain self-esteem and a real sense of achievement that spurs a healthy confidence. What we do every day in classes helps them on this path. What we do supports the Stirrups 'n Strides Vision: **Empower. Enrich. Inspire.**

As always, I can't thank our volunteers enough for the endless hours you put in to the program. Your hearts shine through and you truly are 'making a difference' in the lives of others at Stirrups 'n Strides.

Your efforts are a big part of the magic that is

horses helping humans!! Thank you, **Betty**

Sponsor A Rider



We are looking for sponsors and scholarship \$ for our riders. We do not turn away riders in need of equine assisted therapy, but community support is crucial to this effort. It costs us approximately \$1,000/year per rider. If you know someone looking for that special way to help make a difference in the life of an individual who can

benefit from therapeutic riding, information is available on our website or call Stirrups 'n Strides at 352-427-3569.

Program Development

Making Strides into the Future - Covered Arena Project



On 3/28, Stirrups 'n Strides was thrilled to be awarded a grant for \$7,500 from Clay Electric to help build our stalls in the new arena. Dustin Echols & Jim Beeler, District Manager of Clay Electric presented the check with a visit to Stirrups 'n Strides. Tucker introduced himself 'Tucker style' & joined in!

Walking Into the Future, Brick by Brick

More progress has been made toward the new arena community walk project! We have 60 engraved bricks to date (Goal: 200) that will line the walkway to the arena. Do you have a special occasion or a loved one that you are looking for a unique gift or a commemorative contribution? Community businesses have also made a donation for bricks to promote their business. (Purchase bricks online at stirrupsnstrides.com.)

Grants and Funding

There are several areas of focus for the arena including electric, plumbing, fans, ramp, community room and signage. We are actively seeking grants, 'in kind' donations and support to make this dream come true. Contact Betty Gray, 352-427-3569.

Community Awareness & Partnerships

Starbucks

Starbucks/Ocala had their Open House in February and Amigo & Stirrups 'n Strides friends made a grand appearance to welcome folks! There's a \$million\$ smile! Great job at reaching out, Amigo! We appreciate all the support we get from Starbucks!



Horse Talk Radio

Louisa Barton, The Horse Talk Show host, featured us on their program and paid a visit to the farm in March. Thank you, Louisa, for the opportunity to be on your show!



Out and About . . .

Along with regularly scheduled meetings and events, this quarter community outreach efforts included:

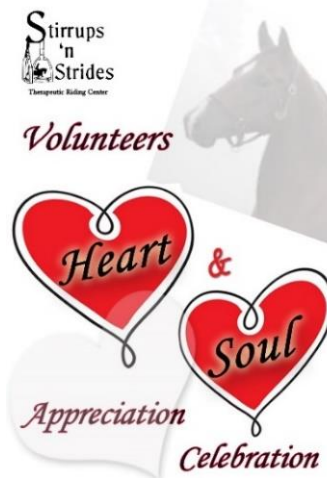
Berrittini Feed Barn Yard Sale – 3/11

The Horse & Pet Expo – 4/1

Citrus Cup Show – 4/7

Celebrations!

We appreciate all you do! Volunteers are the Heart & Soul of Stirrups 'n Strides and have a vital role in making a difference in the lives of others. Your wonderful contributions are witnessed each day and we can't thank you enough for all you do! We are planning a celebration in honor of our volunteers on Sunday, April 30th at Grand Lakes Resort! Invitations have gone out and if you haven't responded please RSVP to Anita Gossett, Volunteer Co-Coordinator at 352-817-6446.



Upcoming Events

April 23rd: Marion Saddle Club Horse Show, Longwood Farm

April 30th: Volunteer Appreciation Celebration and Awards & Recognition, 1PM, Grand Lake Resort

May 6th: Farmland Festival, Coon Hollow, McIntosh

May 27th: Last day of riding & End of the Year Party, SnS

June 10th: Summer Fun Horse Show, Grand Oaks, Weirsdale

June 16-18: Family Café, Summit on Disabilities, Orlando